NOV. 7
10¢

Exciting Mysteries

DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY

FORMERLY FLYNN'S

Fangs of Felony

Strike Their Poisoned Death at Bill Wallison

A Stirring Novelette by

JOHNSTON McCULLEY

WHITMAN CHAMBERS
J. LANE LINKLATER
MARGIE HARRIS
MAX BRAND

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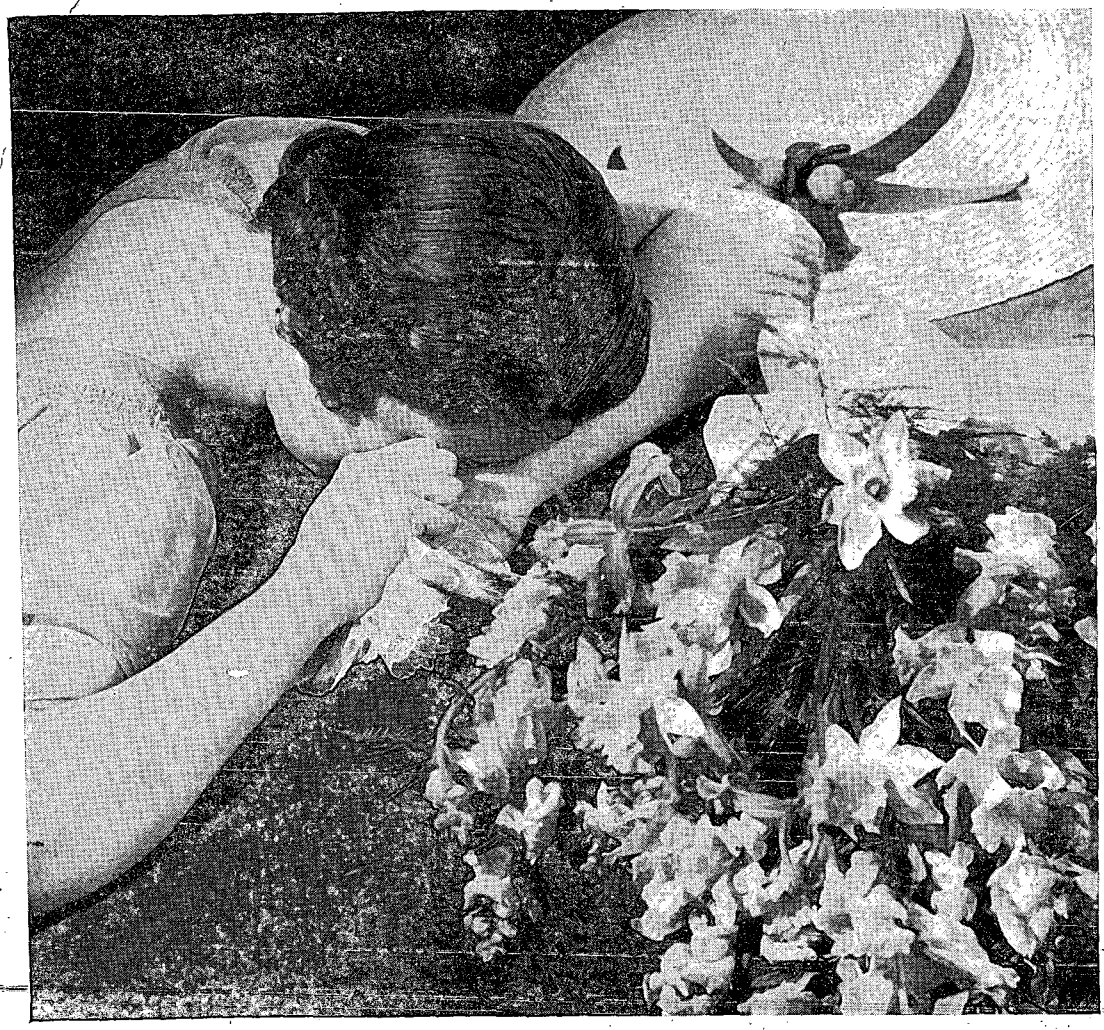

Often a bridesmaid but never a bride

EDNA'S case was really a pathetic one. Like every woman, her primary ambition was to marry. Most of the girls of her set were married—or about to be. Yet not one possessed more grace or charm or loveliness than she.

And as her birthdays crept gradually toward that tragic thirty-mark, marriage seemed farther from her life than ever.

She was often a bridesmaid but never a bride.

* * *

That's the insidious thing about halitosis (unpleasant breath). You, yourself, rarely know when you have it. And even your closest friends won't tell you.

Sometimes, of course, halitosis comes from some deep-seated organic disorder that requires professional advice. But usually—and fortunately—halitosis is only a local condition that yields to the regular use of Listerine as a mouth wash and gargle. It is an interesting thing that this well-known antiseptic that has been in use for years for surgical dressings, possesses these unusual properties as a breath deodorant.

It halts food fermentation in the mouth and leaves the breath sweet, fresh and clean. *Not* by substituting some other odor but by really removing the old one. The Listerine odor itself quickly disappears. So the systematic use of Listerine puts you on the safe and polite side. Lambert Pharmacal Co., St. Louis, Mo

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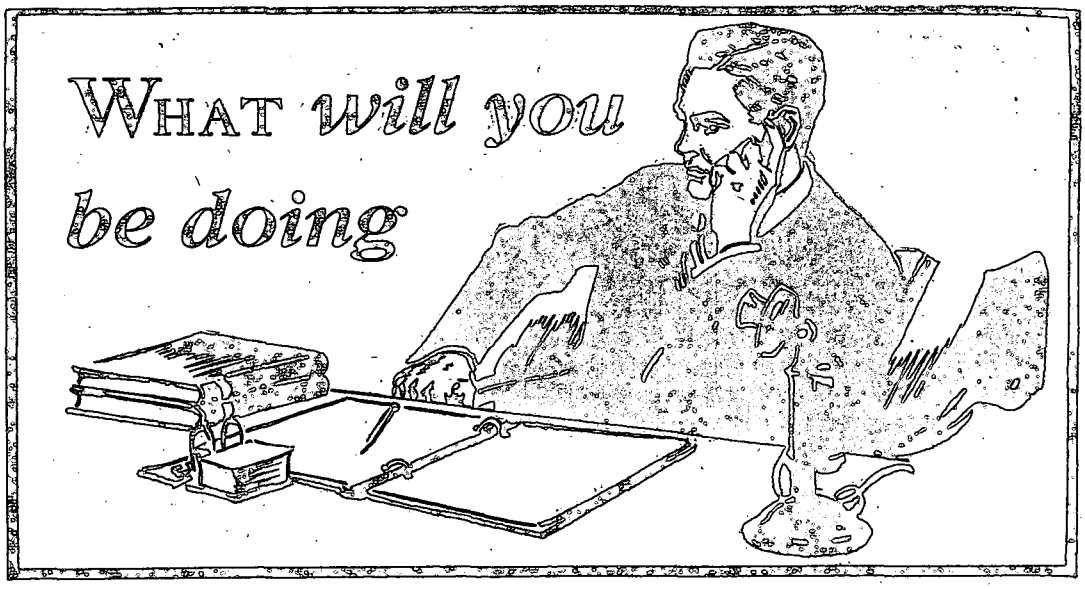

ONE YEAR from today?

THREE hundred and sixty-five days from now—what?

Will you still be struggling along in the same old job at the same old salary—worried about the future—never able to make both ends meet?

One year from today will you still be putting off your start toward success—thrilled with ambition one moment and then cold the next—delaying, waiting, fiddling away the precious hours that will never come again?

Don't do it, man—don't do it.

There is no greater tragedy in the world than that of a man who stays in the rut all his life, when with just a little effort he could advance.

Make up your mind today that you're going to train yourself to do some one thing well. Choose the work you like best in the list below, mark an X beside it, and without cost or obligation, at least get the full story of what the I.C.S. can do for you.

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☆ Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X: ☆

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Formerly FLYNN'S

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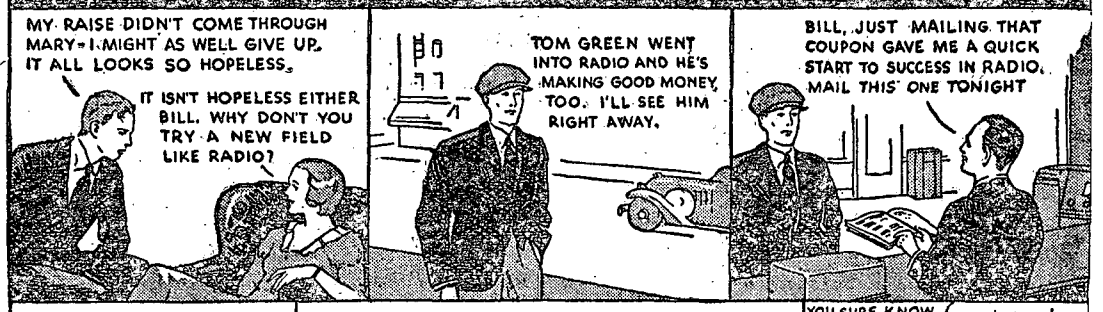
HE THOUGHT HE WAS LICKED—THEN A TIP GOT BILL A GOOD JOB!


MY RAISE DIDN'T COME THROUGH MARY—I MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP. IT ALL LOOKS SO HOPELESS.
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THANKS!

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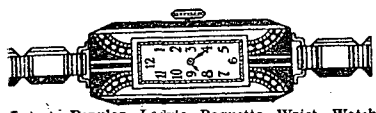

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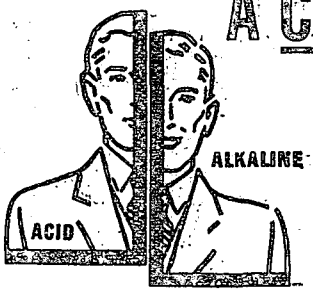

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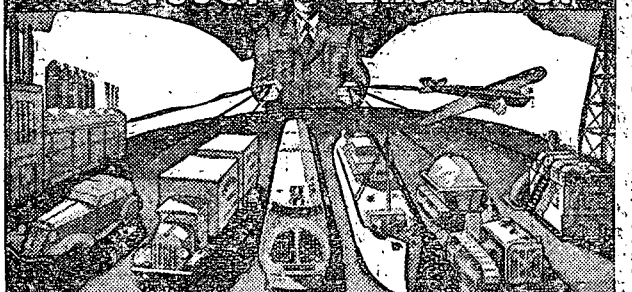

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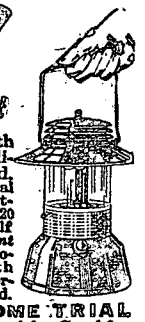

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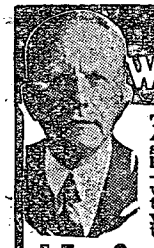

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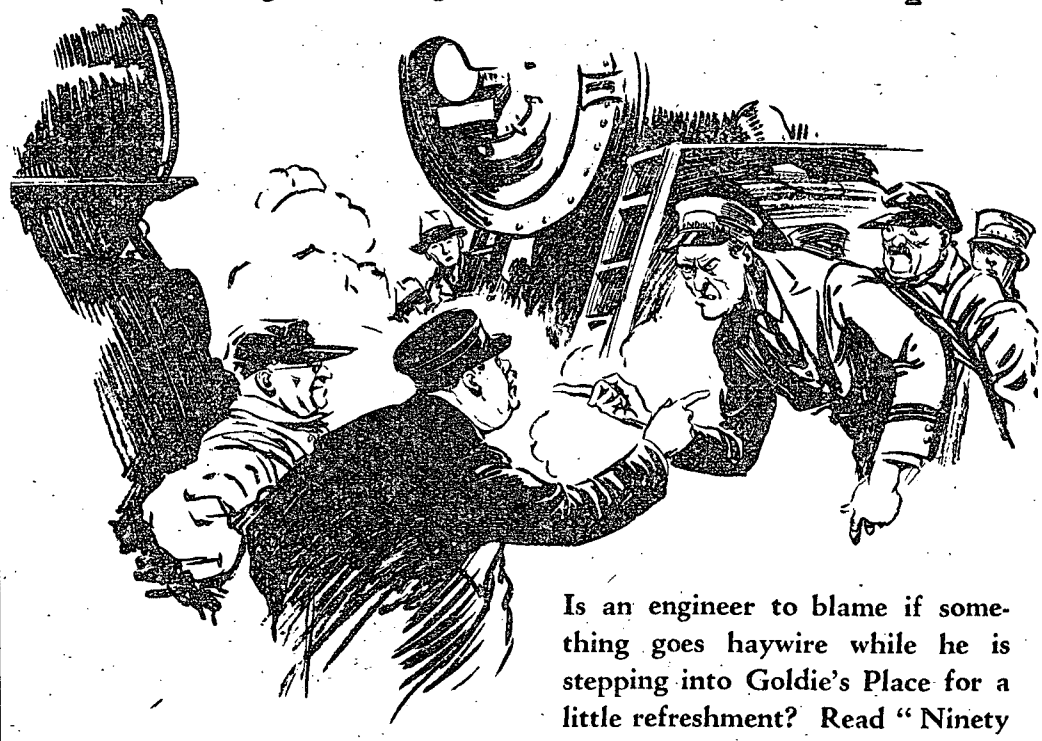

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28x5.25-18	2.45	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.50	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.80	1.15
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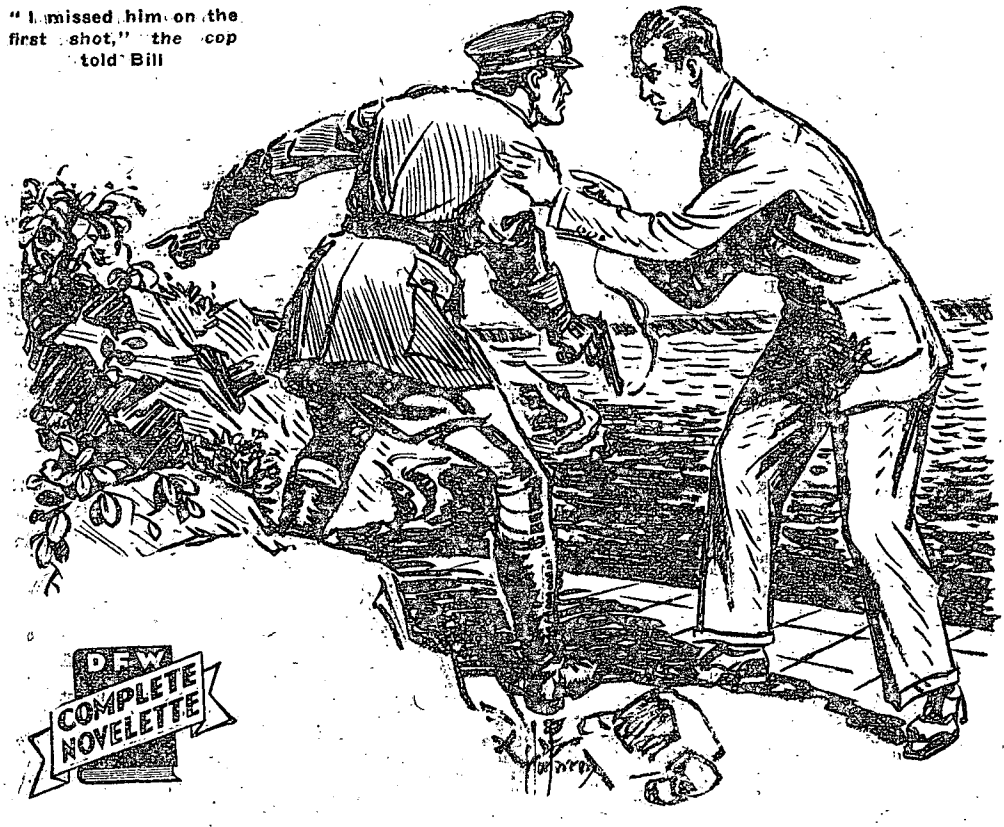

"I missed him on the first shot," the cop told Bill

D F W COMPLETE NOVELETTE

Fangs of Felony

By Johnston McCulley

CHAPTER I

Shattered Peace

IT was the terrible scream of a terror-stricken man that startled Grandmother Valke that Sunday afternoon as she sat dozing in her easy chair in a shady corner of the patio on the Valke estate near Santa Barbara.

Grandmother Valke's eyes popped open and her elderly body straightened with a jerk. Her right hand groped for her ever-present cane. Her left hand brushed across her face in a gesture of clearing her brain.

Again she heard a scream, nearer and louder, and the sound of booted feet pounding the garden walk, and the hoarse rattle of a man breathing heavily.

The pounding feet came nearer. There was another screech of terror, and through the archway and into the patio rushed Sato, the head gardener of the estate.

Sato was middle-aged, stoical, a Japanese who seldom showed emotion except to grin widely at Grandmother Valke's tantrums at times. That made his present conduct all the more in-

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The others were aroused by the shots

explicable. He came to an abrupt stop in front of Grandmother Valke's chair, acting like a terrified child who had reached the sanctuary of his mother's skirts.

"Sato!" Grandmother Valke's voice rasped in stern rebuke. "Have you gone insane? What's all this racket?"

"S n a k e . . . snake," Sato whimpered.

"What's that?"

"See beeg snake."

"Sato, you made a trip to Santa Barbara yesterday to get a load of fertilizer," Grandmother Valke reminded him. "If you brought home a jug of that infernal rice wine—"

"Beeg snake!" Sato howled. "Real snake—not rice wine snake. Beeg snake hang down and swing. Somebody get gun!"

A Venomous Reptile Was at Large on the Valke Estate and There Was Only One Way to Snare It—so Bill Wallison Deliberately Exposed Himself to the Dart of Its Swift and Deadly Fangs

Sato's wild screams and strident talk had attracted the attention of others. A grandson, Louis Valke, came hurrying into the patio from the house. His pretty sister, Nancy, was with him. On the balcony suddenly

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appeared Carlos Morello, another grandson—offspring of what Grandmother Valke considered the unfortunate marriage of her only daughter, Hetty, now deceased.

Carson, the wooden-faced butler, also came hurrying into the patio, followed by a maid. A storm of jabbering began.

Grandmother Valke's cane tapped for attention. "Calm down, everybody!" she ordered. "Something's wrong. Sato doesn't act like this for nothing. He's probably been badly frightened by something he took to be a snake—"

"Beeg snake!" Sato persisted. "Hang in bamboo and swing. See eyes glitter and tongue dart out. Get gun, somebody!"

"Less noise!" Grandmother Valke snapped. "Henry's having his Sunday nap, and I don't want him disturbed."

HENRY was Grandmother Valke's first-born, the father of Louis and Nancy. He was her idol, a widower of fifty, a splendid man of business who handled the vast Valke estate in a capable manner. Henry and his two children made up Grandmother Valke's intimate world.

Louis Valke touched his grandmother on the shoulder.

"I'll look into this snake affair," he offered.

"Couldn't believe what you reported if you did," she replied. "You're as excitable as Sato. I'll go myself. A walk to the swimming pool and back won't hurt me. If there's a big snake, I want to see it. Haven't been to a circus or zoo for ages. Used to kill rattlers with a club when I was a girl."

Louis and his sister exchanged swift glances. The third generation of Valkes did not like to hear Grandmother recount tales of her youth, when her husband had been a poor mining prospector, food and raiment scarce, and the Valke ménage only a rickety cabin in the hills.

Grandmother Valke got out of her chair, and Carson, the butler, adjusted her shawl around her shoulders. She picked up her cane and started toward the patio archway. Louis and Nancy walked beside her.

Carlos Morello descended the steps from the balcony languidly and joined the group.

"If there's really a snake, Grandmother, perhaps I may be of service," Carlos Morello said. "In my country—"

"I know. Your country's full of snakes, human and otherwise," Grandmother Valke interrupted, as she led the way along the garden path.

Her speech had a hidden meaning. A quarter of a century before, Hetty Valke had fallen in love with a handsome adventurer named Morello, from Nicaragua. She had jilted a young society physician, Dr. James Darwick, and had eloped with the stranger. A year after her marriage, Carlos had been born.

Two years later there had been a brother, Felipe.

Cut off by her family for this escapade, Hetty Morello never saw any of them again. Three years before this afternoon, both she and her husband had died during a fever epidemic. And now Carlos Morello was visiting his grandmother, uncle and cousins for the first time, bringing with him a personal body servant, one Pedro.

His brother, Felipe, had remained behind to manage their plantation, he had explained, and would visit in turn when he could.

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Grandmother Valke had gleaned that the Morello plantation was none too prosperous. She had anticipated a plea for money, but Carlos had asked for none.

Grandmother Valke had not warmed toward him much.

He reminded her too much of his father.

She glanced at him now as he strode along beside her. A handsome young scalawag of twenty-five — like his father before him! He had made young feminine hearts in the neighborhood flutter. But he had shown preference for none of the girls. Grandmother Valke had watched him carefully, but had not detected a wrong word, act or even glance.

THEY went along the curving walk toward the large swimming pool, at one corner of which was a huge growth of bamboo. Sato began whimpering again. Grandmother Valke berated him to silence and hurried along, her cane tap-tapping on the flagstones. She stopped a short distance from the bamboo clump, and the others stopped around her.

"Well, Sato, where's your snake?" she demanded.

Sato pointed. "Saw beeg snake right there."

But no big snake was coiled in the bamboo. There were sighs of relief, and, as the others hesitated, Carlos Morello went forward to make an investigation.

"A snake has been here," he announced.

"What's that?" Grandmother Valke rasped. "You're as crazy as Sato."

"Look, please." Carlos Morello indicated a dusty stretch of ground, where there was a distinct trail in the dust.

"Fiddlesticks!" Grandmother Valke exclaimed. "How do you know a snake made that?"

"If you'll please come a little closer, and catch the odor—" Carlos Morello suggested.

A breath of the breeze carried it to them—a slight fetid odor which spoke of jungles and jungle monsters and almost nauseated them.

"Beeg snake! Sato not lie," the gardener declared. "Hang down and swing—"

"Well, let's do something about it!" Grandmother Valke put in. "No snake can get me down. I've killed many of 'em in my time. Sato, get those lazy rascals who're supposed to help you with the gardening, and find the thing and kill it."

"How could such a snake come here?" Nancy Valke asked, her eyes wide with horror.

"No mystery about it," her grandmother replied. "That sort of reptile doesn't breed hereabouts. Haven't seen even a rattler around here in years. If it's a big snake, as Sato says, it's probably escaped from captivity. Possibly it was being shipped in a crate and dropped off a truck on the highway. It may have been on the way to a circus or zoo. Might belong to some carnival company."

"I'll telephone the state police," Louis said.

"You'll not!" his grandmother barked. "Let Sato and his men handle this. If it gets out, the newspapers will be saying that everybody at the Valke place is seeing snakes. It'd give the reporters a fine chance to be funny. Sato, you get busy! Trail the thing and kill it before dark, or nobody'll sleep a wink."

Grandmother Valke turned back toward the house, her relatives aroun-

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her, and with Carson, the butler, hurrying ahead. Sato ran to call the assistant gardeners.

And then, for the second time that afternoon, the calm of the Valke estate was broken by a piercing scream. This time, it was a housemaid, Celeste, who screamed. She came running from the patio and down the garden path, to be caught and held by the butler.

"Celeste!" Carson hissed at her. "Are you insane? What do you mean by—"

"He's dead . . . dead!" she cried. "Oh, it's terrible! I looked into the room—" Then the maid fainted.

CHAPTER II

Double Mourning

AN HOUR LATER, Grandmother Valke was sitting stiffly erect in a chair beside the long table in the living room. Her eyes were bright and burning, reflecting unshed tears. Her face was set in an expression of rigidity.

She had lost Henry, her only son, the man in whom she had great pride. As usual, he had retired for his Sunday afternoon nap, leaving orders to be awakened at a certain hour. The maid had gone to call him. She had found the door of the bedchamber open. Glancing into the room, she had seen Henry Valke stretched across the bed, dead. She had run screaming from the house.

For this was not an ordinary natural death. One glance had been enough to reveal that. It was something more terrible and shocking than an unexpected heart attack.

The big house suddenly had become a place of horror. Frantic servants were rushing about in an agony of terror. Carson, the usually phlegmatic butler, had lost some of his customary poise.

In response to a telephone message, Dr. James Darwick had hurried out from town. He had remained the Valke family physician despite Hetty Valke jilting him years before, and had never married. He made a swift examination, then notified the state police and county authorities. Some motorcycle officers had arrived, under command of Sergeant Dan Kelly.

They knew, now, that Henry Valke had died from snake venom. It had surged through his veins and into his heart, causing a terrible death. The tell-tale twin punctures were on the right forearm, showing where the fangs had struck.

Henry Valke had been dead an hour or more when found, Dr. Darwick declared. A fetid odor was faintly discernible in the bedchamber. The thin film of dust on the small balcony outside an open window was marred by an ominous streak. Vines had been broken around a drain pipe at the corner of the balcony, and the odor could be detected there, too.

"Plain enough to me," Sergeant Dan Kelly declared. "The snake got up the drain pipe, got on the balcony and into the room, and struck Mr. Valke as he was sleepin'."

"But snakes seldom strike a motionless object," Carlos Morello objected. "Down in my country we have a lot of experience with them, and I know something of their habits. If my uncle was asleep—"

"Maybe Mr. Valke happened to drop his arm or move his hand in his sleep, and the sudden movement caused the snake to 'strike,'" Dr. Darwick suggested.

"That's possible," Carlos admitted. "And what became of the snake?

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We'd better be doin' some thinkin' about that," the sergeant said.

"I dislike to alarm the others, but perhaps it'd be best to let them know, so they can be on guard," Carlos Morello replied. "If you'll examine closely, you'll find the snake odor in the hall. It's my belief the snake went through the door—"

"Then it may still be in the house—may strike somebody else," Dr. Darwick said. "I'll have an antidote ready."

"My men are busy searchin' for that snake inside the house and out," Sergeant Kelly put in. "Let's see if we can trail the thing."

Carlos Morello led them into the hall. The odor could be detected along the runner on the hall floor. The trail led down a rear stairs and to an open window on a landing, and there, in another film of dust, were indications that the serpent had gone down to the ground again.

Outside, the trail led a short distance to a huge pepper tree and disappeared. From that tree, the snake could have gone on to others, to the high wall surrounding the estate, and thence outside the Valke grounds.

"It'll be dark in an hour," Sergeant Kelly said. "We'll try to catch and kill the thing before that. Everybody'll have to be careful until the snake's accounted for. If you see it, shoot quick!"

NEWS of the tragedy had traveled to adjoining estates, and the neighborhood was terrified. Doors and windows were closed and locked. Armed servants searched. There could be no rest from fear until the serpent was found and exterminated. The menace might be lurking beneath any clump of shrubs, at the dark corner of any building, ready to strike again if frightened or angered.

When darkness came, the snake had not been found. Men continued searching with flashlights. Henry Valke's body had been removed to a mortuary in town. The Valke mansion was searched thoroughly, and all doors and windows closed tightly for the night.

Despite the peril, Grandmother Valke refused to leave the place, and kept the others with her, setting an example for the terrified servants, some of whom were ready to bolt. Dr. Darwick remained for the night, to be of service if needed.

Louis Valke and his cousin Carlos sat up late talking of the tragedy. Nobody would have taken them to be relatives. In appearance and manner they were dissimilar. Carlos Morello was three years Louis' senior — swarthy, handsome, with the air of a sophisticated man of the world.

Louis Valke was boyish in manner, of light complexion, congenial and well liked.

"I can't understand this," Carlos Morello said. "I know something about snakes. One as large as Sato declares he saw probably would be a constrictor. But it was venom killed your father, not the crushing power of a constrictor."

"No question about that. Dr. Darwick says it was venom," Louis Valke agreed. "And there was the wound where the snake had struck, the two tiny punctures."

"Everybody will feel relieved when the thing is located and killed."

"Anyhow, we're safe enough," Louis Valke said. "The house has been searched, every door and window is closed, and some of the servants will be up and about all night."

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"I told Pedro to mix nightcaps for us and bring them here—that rum drink you like," Carlos Morello said. "We'd better turn in and get some sleep. You've had an ordeal, and you'll be busy tomorrow. You'll have many duties, now that you're the male head of the family." There was a trace of bitterness in his voice.

"Father's death won't cause much change," Louis replied. "His interests will simply pass to Nancy and me, outside the usual personal and charitable bequests."

"I'm not much interested in the family fortune. My brother Felipe and I—we're outsiders, you know." Bitterness was in Carlos Morello's voice again. "That's the penalty for being sons of our mother."

"Sorry," Louis muttered.

"I never heard her say a harsh word against the family that cut her off. But, loving her as we did, and knowing how she suffered, Felipe and I learned to hate the name of Valke. But there's no sense in this kind of talk now—and here's Pedro."

Pedro shuffled into the room, carrying a tray with two drinks on it. He was small in stature, swarthy, rather furtive in manner, and spoke English haltingly.

"Here's a special nightcap after my personal recipe," Carlos Morello said, smiling slightly. "Let's drink and get to bed."

Pedro served the drinks silently and shuffled out of the room. The two drank, then ascended the stairs side by side. They bade each other good night, and each went to his own room.

Grandmother Valke and Nancy were still awake. Nancy had decided to spend the night in her grandmother's suite. Her first wild grief at her father's tragic death had subsided. She crouched now beside her grandmother's chair.

"I can't realize it, can't believe it," she said. "It just couldn't have happened. And I have a queer feeling about it — that there's something wrong."

"Strange! I've had that feeling, too, all evening. But it's just the shock. We're not thinking rationally," her grandmother said. "Sato saw the snake, Dr. Darwick says venom caused death, and there was the odor and other evidence."

"Grandmother, I must telephone Bill."

"Bill Wallison? Call him, dear, if you like. Yes, he should be here with you, to comfort you. Since he's to be your husband—"

"If there's something wrong, Bill will find it out," the girl said.

"Huh! I wish he'd give up that fool detective business!"

"Grandmother, Bill isn't a fool detective. He's a special investigator in the district attorney's office in Los Angeles."

"A man with his social position and money—"

"Bill doesn't want to be a playboy. He liked the work, and he's good at it, too. Helping run down criminals—that's a man's work, Grandmother."

"All right, honey. You don't have to defend Bill Wallison to me. I've known him since he wore diapers. He'll make you a splendid husband, even if he does like to play detective. He'll get over that some day. Anyhow, it's probably safer than polo. Call him, my dear."

Nancy went to the telephone and put through the call. It was almost an hour before she could talk to Bill Wallison. He was working on a case, and had to be contacted. But finally she

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heard his voice over the telephone wire, and into his ears poured news of the tragedy.

She heard Bill Wallison's assurance that he would get leave from duty immediately, turn over to another man the case on which he was working, and try to reach her side early in the morning. Then she crept into bed with her grandmother.

IT WAS shortly after dawn when Bill Wallison came rushing along the highway in his powerful roadster, to stop with squealing brakes in front of the gate to the Valke estate, where a group of men had gathered.

"Good mornin', sir!" Sergeant Dan Kelly greeted him. "I thought maybe you'd be comin' to comfort the young lady. It's a terrible thing, this—gives a man the shivers."

"Found the snake yet?" Bill Wallison asked.

"Nobody's seen it. But we'll keep on searchin' till it's caught."

"Find where the snake came from?"

"That we haven't, Mr. Wallison. No report of an escaped snake. And from what the Jap gardener says, it ain't the kind you'd expect to find runnin' loose around here."

"Has anybody but Sato seen the thing?"

"He's the only one, as far as we know," the sergeant admitted.

Thoughtfully, Bill Wallison drove along the curving driveway to the house and parked his car. He got out and stretched his six feet of athletic young manhood and rubbed his tired eyes. The house was quiet, and he decided it was too early to arouse anybody, and that he would wait until some of the servants appeared. He got back into the car and relaxed in the seat.

Of this tragedy he knew only what Nancy had told him over the telephone. She had hinted at believing her father's death had resulted from a criminal act. Bill Wallison was inclined to ascribe that belief to the mental condition of a grief-stricken, overwrought girl to whom tragedy was something new.

Yet, he wondered. He knew the family history—and he did not like Carlos Morello. The idea of a snake associated itself in his mind with certain other ideas—jungle country, queer means of revenge and gain, mental processes different from the Anglo Saxon.

Curled up in the seat of his car, Bill Wallison dozed. A tumult awakened him. Somebody was screeching. Officers were hurrying along the driveway toward the house. Orders were being shouted in raucous voices. Somebody opened a window on the upper floor of the house and called for help.

Bill Wallison sprang out of his car and ran toward the front door. It was opened as he approached, and Carson, the butler, came out on the veranda. "Oh, Mr. Wallison—" the butler whimpered.

"What's happened, Carson?"

"It's Mr. Louis, sir. He's dead. The snake again, sir."

Bill Wallison gave a cry of horror, brushed the butler aside, and rushed into the house.

CHAPTER III

Suspicion

WITH Sergeant Kelly to aid him, Bill Wallison took immediate command of the situation.

Terrified, half-clad servants rushed out of the house and into the open. Grandmother Valke and Nancy awoke to fresh shock and grief, and Bill Wal-

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lison did what he could to comfort them and prevailed upon them to go to a neighbor's temporarily. Dr. James Darwick, rubbing the sleep from his eyes, hurried to the room of tragedy.

"Everybody outside!" Kelly shouted. "Keep the doors and windows closed."

"Is everybody accounted for?" Bill Wallison asked the butler.

"All out except Carlos Morello, sir," Carson replied. "Here comes Pedro, his servant."

Pedro was hurrying down the stairs, his eyes wide with terror. He started for the front door, but when he saw Bill Wallison turned toward him.

"*Señor*—" he begged. "Do somet'ing, please."

"About what? Where's Morello?" Wallison asked.

"He es asleep, *señor*."

"Asleep through all this racket?"

"I cannot wake him, *señor*."

"Maybe he's been bitten too," Kelly said.

Bill Wallison charged up the stairs and along the hall to the room Carlos Morello occupied; Kelly close behind him and Pedro following. They found Carlos Morello stretched on his bed, breathing heavily. They began shaking him. Kelly shouted for Dr. Darwick, who came hurrying into the room.

"This man acts like a doped person," Dr. Darwick declared. "No evidence of snake venom. Let's get him on his feet."

Wallison and Kelly lifted him, shook him, saw his eyes finally flutter open.

"Wh—what—?" Carlos Morello muttered.

"Wake up, man!" Bill Wallison barked. "The snake—it got Louis during the night. Get on some clothes and get outside the house."

"Wh—what—?" asked Carlos.

Wallison turned to Pedro. "Get slippers and a dressing gown on him, and get him outside," he ordered.

"Doped," Dr. Darwick declared. "Fresh air will help him. Call me, Pedro, if he doesn't recuperate quickly."

Wallison and the others returned to the hall. "What kind of dope?" Wallison demanded. "You mean he took it himself, or had it given him?"

"I can't tell that. It might have been a sleeping powder. We can go into that later. About the case of Louis Valke — I've telephoned the authorities."

"The snake again — you're sure?" Wallison asked.

"No doubt about snake venom causing death. I found twin punctures on the left arm near the shoulder. And the odor's in the room."

"The snake may be in the room, too," Kelly said, getting his service gun out of its holster.

"The French door to the balcony is open," the physician replied. "There's a trail in the dust."

"All doors and windows were supposed to be kept closed during the night, sir," Carson, the butler, said. He had followed the others up the stairs.

Bill Wallison went into Louis' room with the others close behind him. The body of Louis Valke had been covered with a sheet. A swift search convinced them no snake was in the room, bathroom or closet.

The fetid odor was in the room. The French door to the balcony stood open for about a foot. There was a trail in the dust on the balcony, and some vines were broken around a drain pipe.

"Just like the first case," Sergeant Kelly said. "The snake got in, struck, and got out again."

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"Who discovered this?" Wallison asked.

"I DID, sir," Carson replied. "Mr. Louis left orders to be called quite early. One of the maids went to call him. She couldn't get an answer, grew alarmed, and called me. I came up and knocked and called, but he didn't answer. I turned the knob and found the door unlocked—"

"Was that usual?" Wallison asked.

"I'm not sure, sir. I don't know whether Mr. Louis kept his door locked nights."

"The balcony door was open?"

"Just as you see it now, sir."

"I wonder what person last saw Louis alive."

"Perhaps I can answer that, sir," Carson said. "Quite late last night, Pedro prepared drinks for Mr. Louis and Mr. Morello. He came to me for a tray and glasses. Pedro served the drinks himself to the two in the living room, and returned the tray to me. I heard Pedro go upstairs. A little later, I heard Mr. Louis and Mr. Morello go upstairs also, heard them tell each other goodnight."

"You say Pedro prepared those drinks?"

"Yes, Mr. Wallison. A special rum drink after Mr. Morello's personal recipe, I believe."

Bill Wallison sent Carson away, and told Dr. Darwick to see whether Carlos Morello was getting along all right. That left Bill Wallison alone with Sergeant Kelly.

"Are you thinkin' there might be somethin' fishy about this business?" Kelly asked.

"Doped—and Pedro prepared the drinks," Wallison muttered. "Perhaps Louis was doped, too." He went to the French door and inspected it and the floor of the balcony again. "Look here, Kelly."

"What, sir?"

"Notice those tracks in the thin dust on the balcony? I don't mean what looks like a snake trail."

"Somethin' like footprints, only they ain't," Kelly said.

"Not made by shoes. But they may have been made by a sandal or moccasin of some sort. And look at the catch on the door, Kelly."

Kelly looked. "It's been forced," he said.

"Right! Very careless of somebody to leave those scratches and not tighten the catch screws again afterward. Looks to me, Kelly, like Louis had the doors closed and locked, and that somebody got on the balcony, forced this catch, and got into the room—"

"And if Mr. Louis was doped, he wouldn't know it."

"Right, Kelly. He wouldn't know it, even when the snake struck him. And here's something else, Kelly. Put your nose near this catch on the door."

Kelly sniffed. "It's reekin' with that snake smell."

"It is, Kelly. Just the metal catch. You don't suppose a snake reached up three feet and turned the catch of the door, do you?"

"What are you gettin' at?" Kelly asked.

"It begins to look as though somebody doped Louis Valke, pried open the French door, and introduced the snake into the room. Handling the snake, his hands, or gloves, might have transferred that odor to the catch. Kelly, you know the Valkes pretty well, don't you?"

"Yes, sir. I was watchman here once. Mr. Henry Valke helped me get on the state police."

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"I remember. And you know the family gossip, then."

"Sure! About Miss Hetty jiltin' Dr. Darwick years ago and marryin' that Morello and gettin' cut off by her family."

"What do you think of Carlos Morello?"

"Speakin' unofficially, I don't like him," the sergeant confessed. "He's too-smooth and handsome—got foreign ways, too. But, speakin' the truth, I never saw or heard of him doin' anything out of the way."

"Did it ever occur to you, Kelly, that if all the Valkes were dead Carlos Morello and his brother might come into the big estate?"

"So they might! Are you thinkin'—?"

"I've no real reason for thinking anything except that a snake killed the two men. But it does seem strange that the snake killed Henry Valke, the head of the family, first—and then killed his immediate heir. For those two to be the victims, out of all the people here at the house — it's peculiar."

"There are two Valkes remainin', sir," Kelly reminded him. "Grandmother Valke and the young lady—"

"They must be protected every minute until we know!"

A shiver passed through Bill Wallison's athletic frame. To think of Grandmother Valke or Nancy being a victim like the two men gave him a feeling of horror.

"If we can only find the snake!" Kelly said.

"Have the men keep on searching. How could such a snake come here?"

"If it was maybe brought—say, from Nicaragua—" Kelly hinted.

"How could it be smuggled into the country? How could it be kept without anybody knowing about it? Carlos Morello has been here for more than two months, remember. If he brought the snake here, where has it been kept—and why wasn't it used before?"

"That's got me," Kelly admitted.

"Call in four good men, Kelly. We're going to search the house again, from basement to attic. Have the men outside keep on searching, too. And you and I, Kelly—we'll be lookin' for a place where such a snake could have been kept. But don't hint anything of this."

"I'm wise, sir. They say that some of those gents from jungle countries can handle snakes easy—even train 'em."

"So I've heard. Get your men, Kelly, and we'll make sure everybody else is out of the house."

"I'll pick some trusted men, sir."

CHAPTER IV

Overheard

THE search took three hours. Each room was searched thoroughly and locked. Not a corner of the big house was left unexplored. The snake was not found, nor any nest where it had been kept. Nothing of a suspicious nature was discovered.

"Well, we know that snake's not in the house now," Kelly said. "The only thing's to search outside till it's found and killed. If Sato hadn't seen it, I'd be doubtin' there was a snake. But that's foolish talk. Doc Darwick says snake venom killed the two men, and the wounds show where the snake struck. And I ain't forgettin' the smell."

Officials had come rushing out from town, the body of Louis Valke was removed to the mortuary, newspaper men

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descended upon the place, and more state police and sheriff's deputies came to do guard duty and to search the grounds.

While Kelly hurried away to give his men fresh orders, Bill Wallison walked aimlessly around the grounds, watching the searchers, keeping to himself as much as possible.

Possibly a snake alone was responsible for this, he thought—and possibly not He could not throw off suspicion of Carlos Morello, though he had nothing upon which to base that suspicion.

Dr. Darwick approached him.

"Carlos Morello is all right now," he said. "He wants to go into the house and dress properly."

"You still think he was doped?" Wallison asked.

"No doubt of it. It wasn't liquor. He told me he took nothing, but he may have been lying."

"Maybe both he and Louis were doped in those drinks they took before going to bed."

"It's possible—but Pedro prepared the drinks, didn't he?" the doctor asked. "Would he dope his employer? If so, why?"

"That's something to think about," Wallison replied. "What are your ideas about Carlos Morello?"

"I fear I'm prejudiced," Dr. Darwick replied. "You know the family history. Carlos looks exactly as his father did at the same age. Naturally, that's one reason I'd not like him. But, aside from that, he impresses me as a man not to be trusted. He and his brother are impoverished, I understand. For him to be here and see the affluence of the Valkes, and realize he has no share in it—"

"I can understand what his mental attitude would be," Bill Wallison admitted. "But, just between the two of us, we have no reason to suspect him. You, yourself, have said the bite of a snake caused death in both instances."

"Pardon me, Wallison—I said snake venom."

"That means a snake, doesn't it? What puzzles me is that nobody but Sato ever saw the snake. We've searched the house thoroughly, and the men have searched the grounds and are still searching."

"The wounds, showing where fangs struck, and the fact that venom caused death, certainly points to a snake," Dr. Darwick replied. "But, where could such a snake come from? If Sato is to be believed, it's twice the size of any rattler ever seen around here."

"I'll have a talk with Sato."

Dr. Darwick turned away, and Wallison strolled back toward the driveway to find Carlos Morello. "You can go into the house and dress," Wallison told him. "Take Pedro along, if you like."

"Thanks, Señor Wallison. If there is anything I can do, please command me. These tragedies—they are terrible. My poor grandmother, and the señorita, my cousin—"

"I'll let you know, if I need your help," Wallison promised.

He signalled, and the man on guard at the front door let Carlos Morello and Pedro inside. Wallison waited a moment, then slipped into the house also. He went noiselessly to the head of the stairs, along the hall, and entered a room adjoining that used by Carlos Morello.

WITH his ear to the wall, he could overhear what was being said in the other room. They were speaking in a Spanish dialect, which bothered Bill Wallison not at all.

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"One of us must be awake and on guard continually," Carlos Morello was saying.

"*Si*, Carlos!"

"I don't like the way some of them are looking at me. They'll be getting the idea I have something to do with it."

"Why did we ever come to this place?" Pedro wailed.

"It was the thing to do, was it not? I can't understand the way I felt this morning. You mixed those drinks yourself last night?"

"In the butler's pantry—*si*. Carson got me the glasses and tray."

"You did not turn aside for a moment?"

"For a moment, but to step to the refrigerator, Carlos. You do not suspect that the butler put something into the drinks? Why should he?"

"In a case like this, it is well to suspect everything and everybody," Carlos Morello replied.

"What do we do now?"

"We go outside, and await developments. Señor Wallison seems to be in charge. He is another who does not like me, who suspects me."

"Such an attitude is not to be tolerated!" Pedro said.

"Keep your temper down," Carlos warned.

"It is with difficulty I do that. Hour after hour, I see how you are belittled in this house. This great wealth—some should be yours. Are you not as good as these people? Is not half your blood the same as their blood?"

"You speak only of me. What of yourself?" Carlos Morello asked.

"You are Carlos. I am glad to follow where you lead. Your happiness is mine. But, when I see how they curl their lips at you, I—"

"Quiet!" Carlos interrupted. "We must be very careful. You should know that."

"I think they plan something against you. I have seen this Dr. Darwick whispering to the butler, and to that maid, Celeste."

"You know why Dr. Darwick doesn't like me. I remind him too much of my father."

"If the snake strikes again—" Pedro began.

"Quiet! We must be careful, and watch. Wait till I get on my coat, and we'll go downstairs."

"I am so afraid for you, Carlos."

"We can take care of ourselves. Have courage! A man must meet his enemies and dispose of them. That is the law of life."

That made it plain enough, Bill Wallison thought, as he listened on the other side of the wall. But further conversation, as the others prepared to leave their room, gave him a distinct shock.

"If they should find out the truth concerning us—" Pedro said.

"Courage, Felipe, my brother!" Carlos Morello interrupted.

Felipe, his brother! So he was not Pedro, a mere body-servant. He was Felipe Morello, the younger of Hetty Morello's sons. And why did he masquerade in his grandmother's home as a common valet?

BILL WALLISON waited until he was sure they were out of the house, then slipped into the hall. He went down the stairs slowly, went through the quiet house to the front door. He opened it and stepped quickly outside, closing the door behind him. Carlos Morello and his brother, he saw, had rejoined the group some distance down the driveway.

Sergeant Dan Kelly came hurrying

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toward the veranda steps. But, before he reached Bill Wallison's side, there was a sudden tumult in a distant corner of the estate. A gun barked three times, some man howled, others began running.

"The snake . . . the snake! They've killed the snake!" somebody shouted from down by the swimming pool.

CHAPTER V

A Queer Snake

BILL WALLISON had been an athlete in college, had kept himself in condition since graduation, and his speed now attested to that fact. He ran swiftly, passing many others, tore across the broad lawn, dodged trees and clumps of brush, and got to the end of the swimming pool, where one of the policemen was howling and pointing and dancing with excitement.

"Saw the snake at the edge of the pool," he told Bill Wallison. "I missed him on the first shot, hit him the second, and got him again as he sank."

"Where?" Wallison asked.

"Right by those rocks, at the deep end of the pool."

The Valke estate pool was a small lake, compared to most private swimming pools. Along one side was a sandy beach. At one end were rocks, shrubs growing among them, a rustic bench.

"I think he was crawlin' out of the water and tryin' to get to the rocks," the man who had fired said.

"And he sank?"

"Sank right away. Didn't even twist and squirm much."

"Maybe you didn't kill it, then," Bill Wallison said, as Kelly and some of the others came running up.

"I saw the thing jump when the bullet hit it," the marksman declared.

"Then it sank. That's the deep end of the pool, too, huh?"

"Sure it was dead when it sank?" Wallison asked. "Maybe it was only wounded. Unless you shot the head—"

"Hit it in the body, I'm sure, both times. It's head was in the water."

"What'd it look like?" Kelly asked.

The man described it. "About six feet long and maybe six inches thick. Wasn't movin' when I saw it first. Seemed to be sunnin' itself on the water. Had big yellow spots on it. I saw its eyes glitterin'. It started to move, and its head went down, and I shot."

Wallison got Kelly aside. "Send everybody away," he directed. "You stay with me. We've got to get the thing and make sure. That snake may be good evidence."

Sergeant Kelly ordered everybody back to the house, and they hurried away gladly to spread the news of the snake's demise. Guards at a distance kept others from approaching the pool.

Bill Wallison went to one of the bathhouses at the end of the pool, the one he used when a guest at the Valke estate, and where he kept swimming trunks. He let himself in and began getting out of his clothes.

"You goin' into that pool?" Kelly asked. "Man! Suppose that thing ain't dead."

"You pass word for Dr. Darwick to get here and be ready," Wallison ordered.

Kelly passed word to the guards, who shouted the request to the house. Dr. Darwick came hurrying across the lawn with his medicine case. Dressed in swimming trunks, Bill Wallison emerged from the bathhouse and strolled to the end of the pool. He began looking around the shrubs, particularly around the clump of bamboo.

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In the moist earth he saw fresh footprints—the prints of a woman's shoes. He found a length of stout cord which had been dropped on the ground. On a thorny shrub, he detected a shred of blue cloth, such as might have been caught and torn from a woman's dress.

Saying nothing, Bill Wallison went back to the side of the pool. Dr. Darwick had arrived and was standing beside Kelly. "I'd not do this, my boy," the doctor said.

"Why not?"

"It's dangerous. Possibly the snake was only wounded. It may strike you in the water."

"It's got to be found," Wallison declared. "I can see everywhere under water in this pool. I know about where to look for it, if it's dead. You stand ready with an antidote."

"Have you thought of the possibility of two snakes?" the doctor asked. "The dead snake—if it is dead—may have a mate. It may be some queer sort of water snake, deadly, that has got into the pool."

"You're wasting your breath," Bill Wallison told him. "I'm going in."

"Take care of yourself, sir," Kelly urged.

BILL WALLISON balanced himself at the edge of the pool. He had spoken bravely enough, but a shiver of apprehension ran through him. A venomous monster, twice deadly in wounded rage, might be waiting for him in the depths.

He took a deep breath, and plunged. In an instant, as he swam beneath the surface, he focused his eyes to underwater sight. He could see the clear bottom.

A foot or so from the bottom, twisting and writhing, was what he sought. The big snake seemed to be in the throes of death. Bill Wallison shot to the surface.

"Spotted it," he called to the others. "Doesn't seem to be dead yet. Hand me that garden fork, Kelly."

The fork, dropped by Sato the day before where he had been working when he first saw the snake, was near a clump of brush not far from the pool. Dr. Darwick was nearest.

"I'll get it," he said.

He picked up the fork and hurried to the edge of the pool, where Bill Wallison was waiting in the water, one hand gripping the hand rail. Dr. Darwick seemed to trip over a rock. He plunged forward suddenly, and the heavy fork was thrust outward with terrific force, straight at Bill Wallison's throat.

Sergeant Kelly gave a cry of warning. Wallison jerked his head aside as a tine of the fork scraped his shoulder and brought blood. Dr. Darwick fell sprawling, and for an instant his eyes were within a short distance of Wallison's, and the latter saw the queer expression in the physician's face.

"You almost killed him, Doc!" Kelly cried.

"Sorry. I—I stumbled. Hurt, Wallison?"

"Only a scratch. Forget it."

"You'd better crawl out and let me dress the scratch."

"I'm going to get that snake. The scratch can wait."

Wallison gave Kelly a meaning look, grasped the fork, and sank beneath the surface of the water. Again he saw the thing he sought, on the bottom now. He swam downward. The snake was motionless, undoubtedly dead. Bill Wallison speared it with a tine of the fork, lifted it—to find that it had scarcely any weight at all.

Before he reached the surface, Bill

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Wallison knew that this particular snake never had been alive. He tossed it ashore and crawled out as Kelly and Dr. Darwick hurried to him.

"There's the thing," Wallison said.

"A rubber snake. It had air pumped into it. The bullets punctured it, the air rushed out, and it sank slowly."

"A fake!" Kelly exclaimed.

WALLISON inspected it carefully. "Here's the air valve in the tail," he pointed out. "And here's a piece of cord attached to the head. The cord held it floating on the water. Somebody put it into the bamboo, and removed it after Sato had seen it and rushed screaming to the house."

"But what—?" Dr. Darwick began.

"I don't want anybody to know about this but the three of us," Wallison interrupted. "Just give out that the snake was killed, and that it was a gigantic water moccasin of some sort. You go ahead and spread the news, Dr. Darwick."

"That scratch on your shoulder—"

"More of a bruise than a scratch. It's nothing." Bill Wallison hurried toward the bathhouse, carrying the rubber snake, Kelly following him, and the physician hurrying toward the house.

Behind the bathhouse, Wallison beckoned Kelly. He led him behind the clump of bamboo. "See that cord?" he asked. "Same as that attached to the snake. Somebody cut it when the guard saw the snake and began shooting. See those tracks in the dirt? A woman's shoes. And here's a shred of blue cloth I picked off a thorn."

"But, what's all this mean?" Kelly demanded.

"Two men have died of snake venom, according to Dr. Darwick, and he should know. Here's the snake—a fake one. So what?"

"So no snake struck either of the Valkes," Kelly replied, promptly. "How did they die, then?"

"Snake venom injected into the bloodstream," Wallison said. "That's my idea."

"I saw the wounds," Kelly reminded him. "I've seen snake wounds before—the two punctures—"

"Henry Valke was taking his nap when he was stricken," Wallison interrupted. "Possibly he had been drugged, so an intruder could enter his room safely and inject the venom. Carlos Morello was drugged this morning, and he'd taken a drink before going to bed, with Louis Valke. So, perhaps Louis was drugged also, and did not know when the murderer got into the room. Those tracks on the balcony, made by sandals or moccasins—remember? And the evidence that the French door had been pried open—"

"And maybe it was meant to kill Carlos Morello, too, if he got some of that dope in his drink."

"Or to make it look that way," Wallison said. "I overheard something interesting in the house. Don't pass it on now, and I'll tell you. The servant, Pedro, isn't Pedro and isn't a servant. He's Carlos Morello's brother, Felipe."

"So what?" Kelly asked, plainly astounded at this news.

"It means some sort of game, naturally."

"You know, Mr. Wallison, there seemed to me to be somethin' fishy about the way the doctor stumbled at the pool. If that fork had gone into your throat, it'd have killed you."

"And ended my investigation of this affair," Wallison added, smiling grimly. "Did you notice, also, how the doctor tried to keep me from going into

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the pool? Didn't want the fake snake found."

"I'VE got it!" Kelly announced. "Maybe Doc Darwick and this Carlos Morello are in cahoots in this thing. Maybe they're workin' it together, killin' off the Valkes, intendin' for Carlos Morello to inherit the estate and hand the doctor his."

"I'm afraid you're a poor detective, Kelly. Doctor Darwick hates the sight of Carlos Morello. He'd never team up with him."

"A man'll do anything when he needs coin bad. Doc Darwick lost a chunk not long ago. It was all over town. Got caught in the market. Made the remark that Henry Valke could have saved him and made him rich, but didn't. It soured him a little on the Valkes, him bein' considerable sour already about what happened when he was young."

"That may be true, Kelly. But he'd never team up with Carlos Morello to do murder. Darwick isn't the [illegible]enge type, and Morello is. And how'd it benefit Darwick if the Valkes were killed off?"

Sergeant Dan Kelly's eyes bulged suddenly. "Man!" he said. "Now, I have got somethin'!"

"What?" Wallison asked.

"When I worked here as watchman, they called me into the house one afternoon. Mr. Henry Valke was makin' a new will, and they had me sign as witness. The lawyers were here from Los Angeles. Laughed and gave me a cigar and drink and told me what an honor they were doin' me."

"What's that to do with this?" Wallison asked.

"I overheard 'em sayin' what was in the will. And Doc Darwick's in it for a hundred thousand cash, for good and faithful service. Him goin' bust on the market and needin' money bad — maybe that's the answer. He's a swell, puts on dog, the kind that can't live without money."

"That's something to think about," Wallison said. "Wait till I get on my clothes, and we'll prowl around some. I want to find the woman who left those footprints behind the shrubs, and had that shred of blue cloth torn from her dress."

CHAPTER VI

Some Surprises

THEY went back to the house, leaving the bogus snake locked in Wallison's bathhouse, to find the majority of those on the place grouped near the veranda.

"The snake's dead," Bill Wallison announced. "All you men can go back to town, except those Kelly wishes to remain. It's safe for the servants to go into the house again, and open it up. I'll have one of the chauffeurs carry word to Mrs. Valke and her granddaughter. Perhaps they'd better remain where they are until I communicate with them again."

"I'll stay here at the house, in case they need my attention when they return," Dr. Darwick said. "They may break down, you know, collapse now that the excitement's over."

Bill Wallison merely nodded agreement. The guard stepped aside, the front door was opened, and Carson motioned for the servants to go back into the house. Wallison and Kelly stood to one side watching them enter.

Suddenly, Wallison reached out and touched one of the maids on the shoulder. "I want to speak to you a moment," he said.

She looked at him wild-eyed as she

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stepped aside. The others went past her and into the house.

Wallison walked with her to the end of the veranda, motioning for Kelly to follow.

"I've forgotten your name—" Wallison began.

"It's Celeste, sir."

"Oh, yes—Celeste. You've been housemaid here for some time."

"Three years, sir."

"Were you with the group of servants down the driveway, after you all got out of the house this morning?"

"Yes, sir."

"Celeste, there's some dried dirt on your shoes—it's been mud within the hour. Reddish dirt, such as is found at the end of the swimming pool. And there's a tear in your dress, Celeste. A shred of the cloth has been torn away."

"Why, I—I must have caught it on something."

"On a thorn down by the swimming pool, Celeste. Here's the torn piece—I found it. If you want to talk, Celeste, sit down in this chair by the railing. You look scarcely able to stand."

"I don't know what you mean!" she cried.

"I mean you were at the end of the swimming pool when the snake was shot. Weren't you?"

"Well, I—yes, sir! I just walked down that way. And I saw the snake on the water just as the guard shot, and ran back here—"

"Weren't you afraid to be prowling around like that with a deadly snake loose? You fainted after you found Henry Valke's body yesterday. You ran screaming from the house this morning after Louis was found dead. Yet, you get brave suddenly and go prowling around looking for a snake. Want to do some talking, Celeste?"

SHE looked at him wildly, and seemed on the verge of speech.

But the butler saved her. Carson came out on the veranda quickly and called her: "Celeste! Air madam's room and have it ready. See that the bed is made and the dusting done. They may be returning."

"Yes, Mr. Carson." Celeste started along the railing.

"I'm questioning Celeste," Wallison said. "But, if her duties are so urgent, she may go now."

The girl hurried into the house. Wallison and Kelly eyed each other.

"So what?" Kelly asked.

"That butler may have come out just then accidentally, or he may have done so purposely to keep the girl from answering me."

"I wouldn't trust any butler," Kelly declared. "Mr. Henry Valke sure trusted this Carson, though. All the servants used to talk about it."

"How's that?"

"Mr. Valke didn't want to be bothered with house bills and wages. He always gave the butler a check to cover six months ahead, deposited in his own name, and let him keep the books."

"Six months? That'd amount to something."

"Yeah!" Kelly said. "The staff on this place draws big wages, and the grub and supply bill is somethin' to use an addin' machine on."

"Kelly, I'm going to run into town for an hour or so, and I want you to take charge here," Wallison said. "Have one of your men keep an eye on Dr. Darwick. Watch everything he does and note the people he talks to. Have another fellow watch Celeste."

"I'll 'tend to it, sir."

Kelly went into the house, and Bill Wallison hurried to his roadster and sprang in. On the seat, he found a

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folded sheet of paper. He spread it out, to find words scrawled on it:

Beware! The Snake May Strike Again—Nearer Home.

Nearer home! That might mean Nancy Valke—or himself. For an instant he had an impulse to have Kelly send a man to the neighbor's to watch over Nancy and Grandmother Valke. But he decided they would be safe enough until his return. He drove down the driveway and sped toward Santa Barbara.

Bill Wallison was well known in town. His personal reputation, his connection with the Valkes, and his professional reputation got him courteous and instant attention.

He went to a bank and held a conference with its president. He examined certain accounts, and found much to interest him.

He drove to a broker's office, and had a conference there, and then to the building where Dr. James Darwick's office was located.

Darwick's nurse-secretary knew him. The doctor had telephoned that he would be detained, she said. And she was compelled, in his absence, to take certain medicines to a patient.

"You run right along," Wallison told her. "What I came for—Dr. Darwick asked me to get certain letters from his desk. Wants to dictate answers to Mrs. Valke's secretary, possibly. I'll close the door after I'm done. There's a spring lock on it?"

"Yes," the nurse said. "Please tell the doctor I'll attend to everything. It's been terrible out there, hasn't it? I feel so sorry for Grandmother Valke and Nancy.

"If he'd only got there in time, before they were dead! He might have saved them. One of the doctor's hobbies has been the study of tropical serpents and their venom."

BILL WALLISON lifted his brows at that, but not until the nurse had gone. In the doctor's private office, he closed the door and made sure it was locked. He sped to a filing case and began searching wildly through it, finally uncovering a bunch of letters which interested him.

But it was not enough that Dr. James Darwick, making a special study of venomous serpents, should correspond with a physician in a tropical country. That in itself meant nothing. Physicians throughout the world often exchange notes and advice with others interested in the same things.

One letter interested Wallison particularly, however—that in which the process of extracting venom from live snakes for experimental purposes was described. And finally he found papers which gave him a shock, which showed that Dr. Darwick had imported several tubes of venom of a deadly serpent.

Wallison returned the papers to the case carefully. He began going through the medicine cabinets then. In one cabinet he detected a peculiar, almost nauseating odor, and soon traced it to its source. And eight-ounce bottle had a loose cork, and the odor came from that bottle.

Wallison knew it—the snake odor! He had detected it in the Valke house, in Louis' room. Naturally, a rubber snake left no nauseating remains of its presence. The odor trail at the Valke house, then, had been bogus. And had it come from this bottle?

But Wallison remembered that Dr. Darwick had not been at the Valke house for a couple of weeks, until called there by Henry Valke's death. If Darwick was in this, then, he had an

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accomplice. Somebody had made those false trails and spread that scent while the doctor was in town.

"A chain with a bunch of busted links," Bill Wallison told himself.

He left the office, got his car, drove back toward the Valke estate. He drove slowly, but thought rapidly.

Motive? Carlos Morello had one—revenge and to get the estate after the death of the Valkes. Felipe Morello, masquerading as a servant, had the same. Dr. Darwick had one—to get a fortune left him in a will, when he needed money so badly. And Wallison did not forget that the doctor had a long grievance against a Valke.

Opportunity? Carlos Morello could have injected the venom in Henry Valke's veins that Sunday afternoon, then walked calmly out on the balcony, to descend when Sato cried the alarm about the snake. He could have slain Louis Valke the night before in the same way.

Dr. Darwick had been there the night before, and could have slain Louis Valke. He could not have killed Henry Valke on Sunday afternoon, except through an accomplice.

Carson, the butler, likewise had a motive. He was short in his accounts, and the death of Henry Valke would delay discovery, perhaps enable him to cover the shortage in some manner. And Carson had the opportunity to kill both men.

But there was no connecting link between the venom and bottle of snake stench in Darwick's office and the use of the same at the Valke place. There was no evidence of transportation, of collusion between Darwick and another.

The rubber snake presented a possibility. If Wallison could ascertain where it had been made, who had purchased it, how it had come to the Valke place, he might show a connection between it and the murders. The rubber snake had played an important part. After having been seen, it was a natural assumption, when the victims were found dead of snake venom, that a snake had done the killing. If the snake never had been found, perhaps the thing would have remained a mystery and no suspicion been aroused. It had been a mistake to expose that snake a second time.

When he turned the driveway at the Valke place, Bill Wallison sensed more excitement. Half the servants were out in front of the house again. Sergeant Kelly was gesticulating wildly at some of his men. He ran to the side of the car as Wallison stopped it.

"That rubber snake—it was a joke," he reported. "Grandmother Valke sent word that Louis Valke bought it a couple of years ago, to scare a garden party. It was in the junk room in the basement, she says. Somebody must have got it out and blown it up and planted it in the pool."

"Damned bad taste—and why do such a thing?" Wallison asked.

"And we've killed a real snake."

"What?" Wallison barked.

"The granddaddy of all rattlers. He was wrigglin' along through them tall poinsettias beside the garage. One of the men killed it. So maybe we've been guessin' wrong."

"Maybe," Bill Wallison said.

CHAPTER VII

Hot Trail

GRANDMOTHER VALKE and Nancy returned to the house late in the afternoon. Grandmother Valke remained stoical, but Nancy was breaking. The double tragedy was

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more than she could endure. She clung to Bill Wallison, weeping wildly. Dr. Darwick gave her a sedative, with Wallison watching closely as he did so, and she was put to bed in her grandmother's room, with the windows closed and locked and one of Kelly's men on guard in the hall just outside the door.

Wallison and Kelly held a conference on the veranda in whispers.

"Don't let the rattler fool you," Wallison said. "He just happened to crawl out at the wrong time. That rattler never killed the Valkes. They were murdered." And he told Kelly all he had learned.

"Yeah, but who's guilty?" the sergeant asked.

"That's something for us to find out," Wallison replied. "Can you stay here tonight?"

"Sure! I'll telephone and say you need me."

"And have about half a dozen men here. I want the house surrounded at nightfall. I don't want anybody to get in or out. And here's the plan I've got."

He spoke rapidly, while Sergeant Dan Kelly listened and eyed him wonderingly.

"You may be lettin' yourself in for trouble, sir," Kelly said, when Wallison had finished.

"I'll try to take care of myself. You do your part."

After the evening meal, Bill Wallison asked that everybody in the house gather in the big living room. He included the house servants, the chauffeurs, and even the gardeners.

He held a whispered conversation with Grandmother Valke before he spoke to the others. She came from pioneer stock, and could endure much. Her eyes flashed when Bill Wallison had concluded, and she took her place in an easy chair at the end of the long table.

"My son and my grandson have been murdered," Grandmother Valke said. "The murderer must be found and punished. Bill Wallison, and these officers, will see to that."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Valke, but you are overwrought," Dr. Darwick said. "Perhaps it would be better if you'd take a sleeping powder and retire."

"I stay awake and fight my battle," she told him. "I'm no weakling. I stood beside my young husband in the hills while he searched for gold."

"But, Mrs. Valke, it seems settled that the rattlesnake the men killed—"

"My son and grandson were murdered! No snake did it—except a human snake. Bill Wallison, you go ahead and do as you please."

Bill Wallison stood beside her. "The house is surrounded by officers," he announced. "Nobody can get in or out—except that the gardeners and chauffeurs may go to their quarters after I'm done. It is my belief that Henry and Louis Valke were murdered. In fact, I am quite sure I know the guilty person. In the morning, there'll be an arrest. I'll point the guilty out to Sergeant Kelly, who'll take the murderer into custody."

"You throw suspicion upon everyone here, *señor*," Carlos Morello said.

"You are a suspect," Wallison told him, brutally. "If the Valkes were killed off, you might get a slice of the estate. Because of their relations with your mother, you've no particular love for them, perhaps."

"*Señor!*" Carlos Morello barked angrily. "After many years, I came to visit my relatives for the first time. It was a visit of courtesy, and nothing more."

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"Then why have you used deception? Why have you passed your brother, Felipe, off as your body-servant?"

"What's that?" Grandmother Valke snapped.

"That's true, isn't it, Carlos Morello?" Wallison asked.

"It is true, *señor,*" Carlos Morello said, lifting his head and facing his grandmother.

"Why did you do it?" his grandmother demanded. "Why have your brother pose as a servant?"

"WE wished to pay you a visit of duty and respect after the death of our parents. We saved money to do so. But there was not enough for both of us to come as gentlemen, with proper sets of clothing and money for social obligations. And Felipe would not be separated from me. He has always depended on me so. He suggested the servant idea. Thus, we both could come, and be together, and it would even look much better, me having my personal servant."

"That's Morello's pride, I suppose," Grandmother Valke sniffed. "Queer ideas, you people have."

"Perhaps it is Valke pride, also, Grandmother. You forget, in hating my father, that I am half a Valke."

"So you've no money at all?"

"Only enough for this visit. Our plantation—it is gone. We could not pay for necessary improvements. We return in a few days, perhaps to be common laborers. But your friends need not know that."

"And you haven't asked me for money," Grandmother Valke said. "Maybe you thought you'd get a fortune instead, with the Valkes out of the way."

"When you speak like that, *señora,* I am glad that I am but half Valke," Carlos Morello said.

Bill Wallison held up a hand for attention. "Let's get down to business. Carlos Morello is a suspect, as I've said. It follows that his brother, Felipe, is also a suspect. And we have others. Dr. Darwick, for instance."

"I?" Darwick's eyes flamed.

"You played the market once too often and got caught. You remarked that Henry Valke could have saved you. You're in his will for a hundred thousand cash. You've been studying snakes.

"You imported snake venom and have some in your office. There's a bottle of manufactured snake stench in your office, also."

"Are you insane, man?" Darwick cried.

"All those things are true, aren't they?"

"What if they are? Does it follow that I killed Henry and Louis Valke? I was not here when Henry Valke was killed. I hadn't been here for two weeks or more."

"An accomplice is nothing new," Wallison said.

"Darwick, if you've done this thing—" Grandmother Valke cried.

"Would I kill a lifelong friend and his son for a hundred thousand dollars?" Darwick asked.

"You weren't Henry's friend," she accused. "You've always hated us Valkes because Hetty jilted you. I've watched you, and I know. I've shivered every time you prescribed medicine for us, if you want to know it. And you hate the Morello boys because they're Hetty's. You might have killed my son and grandson and tried to throw suspicion on Carlos and Felipe—"

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"Ridiculous!" Darwick cried. "These tragedies have upset your mind."

"Let's get on," Bill Wallison begged. "We have another suspect—Carson."

"I, sir?" the butler gasped.

"You've been playing the market, too, and you got stung beautifully. You frittered away the six months' advance Mr. Valke gave you for household expenses. You knew discovery was coming when you couldn't pay the servants—"

"Really, sir—" the butler protested.

"OH, I know all about it, Carson. Mr. Valke was the kind to send you to jail, for he hated a person who betrayed a trust. By killing him, you could delay discovery, perhaps cover your theft entirely. You served him a glass of milk before he retired Sunday afternoon. You could have doped it, put him to sleep, then slipped into his room and injected the venom—"

"And where would I get the venom, sir, and how would I know how to inject it?"

"That hints at an accomplice, too," Wallison said, glancing at Dr. Darwick.

"I'll tolerate no more of this!" Darwick cried. "I'm returning to town—"

"Kelly's men have orders to stop you if you try to leave."

"I'll telephone the sheriff—"

"All telephones have been disconnected," Wallison said. "I'll take the consequences. Allow me to continue, please. Carson could have killed Henry Valke as I said. And last night he could have doped those drinks for Louis and Carlos—"

"Pedro—I mean Felipe—prepared those drinks," Carson put in, belligerently.

"But Felipe's back was turned for a moment—and you had your chance. You did not know which drink would go to Louis, so you doctored them both. During the night, you got into Louis' room from the balcony, after prying open the door."

Carson whirled toward Grandmother Valke. "Madam, do not believe this monstrous accusation!" he cried. "It is true that I gambled with the accounts, and I am ready to take punishment for my mistake. But this—"

"Sit down and be quiet," Wallison snapped at him. "I've spoken my little piece. In the morning, I'll announce the name of the murderer. If anybody wishes to come to me during the night and tell anything he knows, I'll be sleeping in the last room of the left wing, where I always sleep when I'm visiting here. I want all of you to remain in this room a few minutes, until I return. You come with me, Kelly. Tell your men to see that nobody leaves the room."

Kelly followed him into a rear hall and up a flight of stairs.

"A good chance to look into the butler's living quarters," Wallison said.

"You think he's guilty?"

"I'm up in the air," Wallison confessed. "We've got to have the goods in this case. Let's pry around in here, now."

They searched the butler's quarters thoroughly. The first discovery of consequence was a pair of slipshod sandals.

"Remember those tracks in the dust on the balcony?" Wallison asked.

"Trail's gettin' hot," Kelly commented.

"And take a look at this—and a smell."

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Bill Wallison had found a pair of old gloves in the bottom of a closet. They reeked with the odor the men knew so well now.

"I reckon that settles it," Kelly said.

"But it doesn't. All this is circumstantial evidence. Carson could say these things had been planted here—and they could have been. Even if this ownership is proved, it doesn't mean that somebody else couldn't have used the things and returned them here for us to find, and thus suspicion be thrown on Carson."

"So what?" Kelly asked.

"So we go back to the living room, Kelly, and let everybody there go about his or her business. And the rest—as we planned."

"You're takin' a chance, sir."

"Not with you on guard, Kelly. If there's an arrest to be made, you'll have to make it. This is outside my jurisdiction, remember. You're to have the credit. It may mean promotion for you."

"Thanks. But, tell me this—why was Louis Valke killed, if the guilty man's the doctor or butler? Killin' Henry Valke was enough to get the doctor his inheritance and give the butler a chance to escape bein' found out."

"That has me puzzled some, too," Bill Wallison replied.

CHAPTER VIII

A Doctor's Word

THOSE in the living room went to their several sleeping quarters. The servants retired. Outside, state policemen were on guard. Inside, Bill Wallison held another whispered conference with Sergeant Dan Kelly, then went to his room.

Sergeant Dan Kelly thereupon let some his men inside the house, and posted them quietly in certain dark corners. He slipped up the stairs himself and into the left wing, got out on the balcony, made himself as comfortable as possible near one end of it, where a flowering vine made a patch of darkness.

The house grew quiet. Outside a mockingbird was singing. The distant hum of passing motors came from the highway. Crickets chirped on the lawn.

Bill Wallison had prepared for bed as usual, in case anybody happened to be spying. Now, he got out and dressed rapidly in the darkness, got out an automatic, and went to sit in a corner of the room in the darkness. A streak of moonlight coming through a window touched the bed, where a roll of bedding made it appear a man was sleeping there.

A little after midnight, there came a soft knock on the door. Bill Wallison slipped across the room, holding his automatic ready, and pulled the door open. One of Kelly's men was in the hall.

"Mrs. Valke wants you, sir," the man reported. "She found me in the hall, and asked me to have you come to her suite."

"I'll come at once."

Wallison hurried to the balcony window and called to Kelly softly: "Mrs. Valke wants me. You stay there and watch. I'll be back as soon as I can."

He hurried down the long hall and into the other wing of the house, and along the hall there to a door at the end. He knocked, and Grandmother Valke opened the door. "Come in, Bill," she said. "We're afraid."

Wallison entered, and Grandmother Valke locked the door behind him. "Afraid?" he asked. "What's happened?"

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Nancy Valke rushed into his arms. "I'm afraid for you, Bill. Grandmother knows what you're doing—it's a challenge to the murderer to try to kill you."

"Sure! That's the idea," Wallison replied. "But we're on guard. Kelly's on the balcony and men are in the halls."

"I'm afraid for us, Bill," Grandmother Valke confessed. "This situation—it's getting me. Maybe I'm getting old or something. Haven't the nerve I had once. If my grandsons, the Morellos, are guilty, Nancy and I are still in the way of them getting the estate."

Bill Wallison looked at the two women — Grandmother Valke, the pioneer, one of the most courageous women he ever had known, and Nancy, the girl he had loved from school days. He knew how he would feel if anything happened to Nancy. He had more than a mere professional interest in solving this case, in knowing that the danger was over. Nancy clung to him again, and he choked as he held her tightly in his arms.

"YOU and Nancy must be married soon, Bill," Grandmother Valke said. "I'm liable to go over the hill any time. The old heart isn't what it used to be. Nancy needs you now, with her father and brother gone. An early marriage, under the circumstances—we can overlook the mourning period."

"Whatever you say, Grandmother, and whatever Nancy wants," Wallison replied.

"And—well, Bill, you'll have to be the head of the Valke estate now."

"I've got plenty of money—"

"Oh, it isn't that! But this splendid estate my husband and son built—it must be preserved. It should pass on, to your children and Nancy's. It isn't the money—it's the idea of accomplishment. This is what my husband dreamed in his young days, when he was half-starving and scratching ground with a pick. Nobody understands that. They think it's the money of which I'm proud."

"There are your grandsons," Bill Wallison said. "If they are innocent—"

"Hetty's boys. I wish I could have seen Hetty again—I really do. It was a mistake, cutting her off. But, after the first few years, neither of us would make an advance. People are such fools."

"If they're innocent of this, something should be done for them," Wallison said. "I was prejudiced against them. But I liked that about one playing servant to be with the other, because they both couldn't have a good front."

"We'll see," Grandmother Valke said.

"I must get back and do my duty. This must be solved," Wallison said. "You'll be safe here. I'll have one of Kelly's men stay right outside the door."

He kissed them both, smiled at them, went out and waited until he heard Grandmother Valke turn the key in the lock. He gave the guard his orders, then hurried back toward his own room.

He turned from the wing hall into the other and stepped along briskly. There was a window at the end of the hall, opening upon the balcony. The window was open. And through it now came a blast of fire as a gun cracked.

A bullet whistled past within inches of Bill Wallison's head.

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He whirled, darted inside, and his own automatic cracked. Outside, men were shouting. Inside, some of the guards came running. Another shot came from the window, and Wallison fired in reply, and began running toward it.

There were no more shots. The balcony was empty when Wallison and the others reached it. Flashlights showed some blood spots—Wallison had hit his man. The vines at the end were torn. That entire section of the balcony was in darkness. The assailant could have got to the ground, or along the balcony and into one of the rooms. The blood-spot trail was not distinct enough to reveal which.

"We'll look for tracks in the morning," Wallison said. "Back to your posts, everybody. Kelly, you get back where you were, on the balcony outside my room."

"Somebody's sure eager to remove you 'cause you know too much," Kelly said, as they went along the hall. "They must've known you went to the other wing, and waited till you came back through the hall. Want to check up now?"

"In the morning. Got to carry out my plan," Wallison said. "I shot that man, whoever he was. He won't be able to hide the wound."

WALLISON let himself into his room, turned on the lights to find everything as he had left it, then snapped them off again and took off his coat. He fussed round the bed, then slipped to the chair in the corner and sat there silently. If he was to have a visitor, he wished the visitor would hurry.

He wanted to have an end of this and get some sleep.

He relaxed in the chair, breathed deeply and regularly, dozed a bit. But he was awake and alert at the first strange sound—the faint creaking of a hinge. He squinted at the hall door, but no streak of light came from the hall to show that the door was being slowly opened.

The creak again—a door was being opened somewhere. Then Bill Wallison's nostrils detected something that made him quiver with fear. The snake scent! It was in the room, was growing stronger.

Suppose there was a snake, after all? Tense, b r e a t h l e s s, Bill Wallison watched and listened. He could see nothing. His ears were strained to catch a soft, slithering sound which would indicate a snake traveling. His blood tingled as he anticipated the sudden stab of fangs.

He fought back an impulse to call to Kelly out on the balcony. And then he saw a faint shadow against the wall—the unmistakable shadow of a human being.

He took breath again and gripped his automatic.

The shadow traveled toward the bed. Bill Wallison realized the intruder had been hiding in the closet, perhaps had entered the room while he was visiting Grandmother Valke's suite. The hall guard might not have seen, and Kelly, out on the balcony, might not have heard.

The faint moonlight gleamed from something the intruder held aloft. Bill Wallison decided he could endure this no longer. Without the slightest sound, he eased himself out of the chair and stepped back against the wall. As his right hand gripped the automatic and held it ready, his left hand groped for the electric light switch.

Light blazed in the room as Wallison shouted for Kelly. He moved

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quickly aside, his automatic ready. A wild scream of rage assailed his ears. The intruder flew at him, right hand extended. Something gleamed in the hand.

The intruder was Celeste, the maid. Wallison gripped her wrist and compelled her to drop what she held. He tossed her back to the bed as Kelly got through the window. "Handcuffs!" Wallison snapped.

Kelly obliged. The touch of cold steel on her wrists seemed to sober the girl.

She looked up at them wildly, then began sobbing.

"Look at this, Kelly!" Bill Wallison showed what the girl had dropped. "A double-pointed hypo needle. Now you know why those wounds looked like where a snake had struck. And I was to be the next victim."

"I warned you—left a note in your car," the girl sobbed.

"I thought you meant Nancy Valke."

"I did. I was afraid she might be killed, too, and she's always been so good to me."

"Want to explain?" Wallison asked.

"I might as well. Can't hide it now. I—I killed Mr. Henry Valke. You see, I'm crazy about Carson, and I knew what he'd done, and was afraid he'd be sent to prison. Dr. Darwick got him into it—playing the market. I went to the doctor to beg him to do something, and he—he suggested things."

"Suggested what?"

"The snake thing. He had that needle and the venom, and that bottle of smelly stuff. He told me how to kill Henry Valke, and said he'd protect Carson, and give us money when he got his inheritance, so we could get married and go away."

"And Carson didn't know?"

"He didn't know. He thought he would go to prison, and was ready to take his punishment. I was trying to save him."

"Why did you kill Louis Valke also?"

"Oh, I didn't! I fixed the snake for Sato to see, then doped Mr. Valke's milk with some stuff the doctor gave me, and got into his room and killed him.

"Then I got outside, and after Sato saw the snake I hid it and hurried back to the house when everybody was excited. Then I pretended to find Mr. Valke dead."

"I want to know about Louis Valke, too," Wallison said.

"Dr. Darwick did that, I know. He hated the Morello boys. He thought that if he killed Louis it'd look like Carlos Morello was killing off the Valkes so he could get the estate. He knew about that rum drink, and put a drug into the rum. He told me so. And he got sandals and gloves from Carson's room, and got into Mr. Louis' room and killed him."

"How do you know all that?" Wallison asked.

"HE told me so, this morning. He said if I said a word he'd draw Carson into it. And this evening he gave me the needle again, and said I'd better kill you, Mr. Wallison, or you'd have Carson arrested in the morning."

"Having you do his dirty work," Wallison said. "He was afraid I'd order him arrested. I found plenty of evidence in his office. Anything else to say, Celeste?"

"That's all, I think. I did it for Carson."

"Kelly, call in one of your men to watch this girl," Bill Wallison ordered.

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"Then, you come with me. We're making a call on Dr. Darwick."

A moment later they were going down the hall. They knocked on the door of the doctor's room.

"Who is it?" a voice called.

"Wallison and Kelly. We want to see you."

There was a moment of waiting, then the light was snapped on and the door pulled open. Dr. Darwick was in pajamas and blinked at them.

"What is it? Am I needed?" he asked.

"You look seedy, Doc—pale," Kelly said.

"All this excitement—"

"Look like you'd lost some blood," Wallison added. "Watch him, Kelly!"

Wallison hurried into the bathroom. There were some bloodstains on the tiling of the floor and a couple on the wash basin. Two towels showed they had been newly rinsed. An odor of drugs was in the room.

Wallison went back to where the others were waiting.

"Doc, you don't happen to be the man who shot at me tonight?"

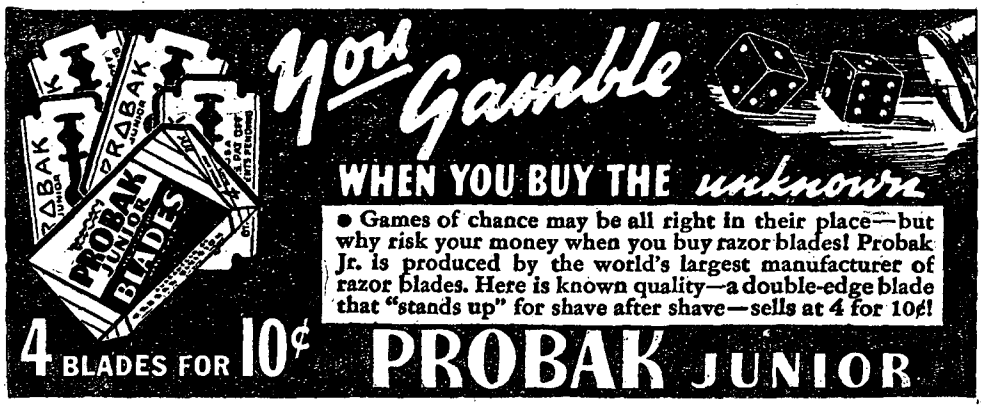
"Shot at you? Don't be ridiculous."

"Whoever did it—I shot him in return," Wallison said. He gripped Darwick's shoulder suddenly, and the physician winced and gave a gasp of pain. "Thought so. Dressed the wound yourself, huh? Must have some nerve at that. Lucky it was through the shoulder—you'll live to swing."

"What do you mean?" Darwick's voice was almost a scream.

"That Celeste girl—we nabbed her as she tried to kill me, and she confessed everything," Wallison said. "You got another pair of handcuffs, Kelly?"

Dr. James Darwick smiled grimly. "You'll not need handcuffs, gentlemen," he said. "When you knocked at the door I knew what it meant. I knew I was done for when my shot missed, unless Celeste got a chance to use the needle. And when I heard her scream a short time ago I guessed she'd failed. So, gentlemen, just before I opened the door for you I drained a vial in my medicine case. I'll be gone in less than half an hour, and nothing can save me. Take a doctor's word for it."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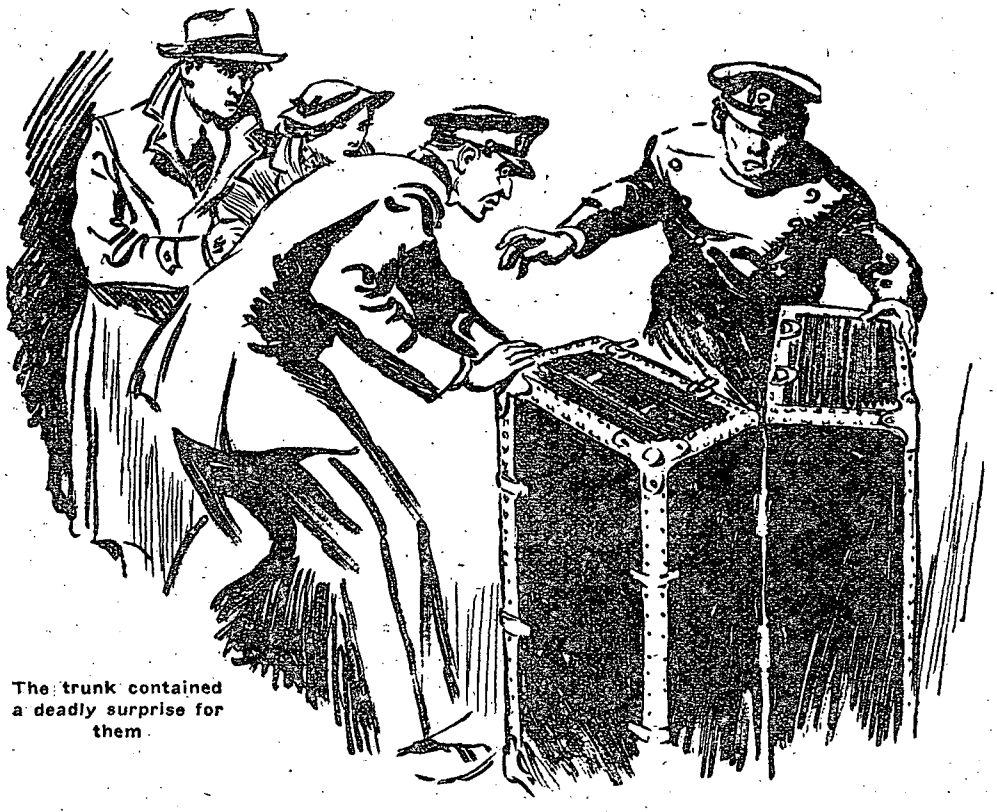

The trunk contained a deadly surprise for them

The Duchess Wins a Bet

By Whitman Chambers

Katie Blayne Accepts a Sudden Challenge, and Snarls Up Cops and Crooks Alike, When She Tries to Unravel the Twisted Mystery of the Corpse That Defied Oblivion

I SAID: "Don't talk to him, Duchess. Don't even listen to him. He's a drunk and a bum and a louse."

"I'm two lices," Jeff Gervin grinned. "So what?"

I took Katie's arm. She tried to pull away from me, but I held on. I dragged her across the press room and through the door, while Gervin gave us a very nasty raspberry. Out in the City Hall corridor, I said:

"Now look, Katie. He just hid those arrest slips to get your goat. The more you argue with him, the more he enjoys himself. Let it pass."

"Let it pass!" Katie repeated angrily. "Do you think Miss Tobin let it pass when I got scooped on the ar-

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rest of that gangster, Lucky Cabrillo?"

"All of which goes to prove," I said, a bit wearily, because it was an old argument, "that a police beat is no place for newspaper women. I've been telling you that for six months."

"Really! And in the last six months who has broken more big stories off the police beat than any other reporter?"

Well, she had me there. In the months she had been covering police for the *Sun,* Katie Blayne had been making me and Pete Zerker and Jeff Gervin and Willie Blake look like a quartette of not very bright cubs.

"It's ten o'clock, Katie, and we've got to work tomorrow. I'll drive you home."

She gave in with a shrug. She wasn't very good company as I drove out Harrison Street and swung around the lake. My radio was tuned on 27 meters and as we turned up Grand Avenue the speaker came to life.

"Calling Car 31. Calling Car 31. Go to 119 Bayside Terrace. A barking dog. 119 Bayside Terrace. A barking dog. That is all."

I laughed. "That's Pete Freitas and Ed Sullivan. Won't they love chasing down a yapping pooch?"

Katie said crisply: "Turn here, Pinky."

"Huh?"

"Turn!"

I turned. "What's the idea?"

"We're on Bayside Terrace now. Up about two blocks we'll find 119."

"How thrilling. Why the sudden interest in this pooch?"

"Why, I like dogs. Didn't you know?"

"Nuts," I said, but I said it under my breath.

I slowed down, watching the numbers on the curb. A small black sedan whizzed past us, shot in front of my car and pulled up. I drew in behind it. Katie and I hopped out just as Pete Freitas and Ed Sullivan lumbered from the prowl car. There was a street light right over us and the two coppers stared.

"The Duchess!" Pete Freitas growled.

"And Pinky Kane," grumbled Ed Sullivan. "Anybody'd think they was a coupla murders out this way."

"Yeah, and if you don't stop chasin' prowl cars," Pete Freitas threatened, "I'll have the chief take that radio off your bus."

You see, Pete and Ed consider themselves pretty important cogs in our law enforcement machine and their present assignment griped them plenty.

We could hear the dog now, yapping steadily, stridently. The barking came from a two-story gray house next door to 119.

A woman, a grayhaired little old woman in black, hurried down the steps of 119, crossed the sidewalk and confronted Officers Sullivan and Freitas with fire in her eye.

"I can't stand it!" she cried hysterically. "It's driving me crazy. It's that Brock dog from across the street. Some way she got into the Felton's basement, next door there, and for a solid hour she's been barking. Brock and Mrs. Felton are partners and—"

"Has that," Sullivan asked slowly and heavily, "got anything to do with this barking dog?"

"No, maybe it hasn't. Only the Feltons have gone to the show—it's bank night—and Brock doesn't seem to be home either. I tried to telephone him. I suppose they went to the show together and left that horrible little yapping dog—"

"Calm yourself, madam," big Ed rumbled. "We police officers have

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nothing else to do but clam up pooches. Officer Freitas, front and center. Forward march Harumph! Harumph!"

SULLIVAN and Freitas, both of them burned to a crisp, started across the lawn and around the darkened gray house. The Duchess lit out after them and I tagged along, a bit burned myself. It seemed to me a lot of people were going to a lot of fuss over a yapping dog.

The basement door at the rear of the bleak gray house stood ajar. Freitas pulled out his flashlight and went in. The rest of us followed. There was nothing in the large cement-floored basement but a big black wardrobe trunk around which capered, barking excitedly, a small fox terrier.

Freitas patted his knee, called: "Here, pup! Here, pup! Nice doggie."

The pup went on barking, without giving Freitas a sign of a tumble. Pete looked around helplessly. I said: "All right, Sullivan. Go into your dance."

Sullivan glared at me, eyed the dog, pulled his long lower lip and said: "Pick him up, Pete. He won't bite us."

"Certainly he won't bite *us*—if *I* pick him up," Pete growled. "How's about you pickin' him up?"

"Well—dogs are a little off my beat. I—"

A step sounded on the walk outside. We turned as a great, broad, thick-chested man filled the doorway. His small, sharp blue eyes blinked in the beam of Pete's flashlight. He said, in a voice heavy and guttural: "That is my dog. My name is Brock. I joost got home from a pigdure show. I am very sorry, gentlemens, if my dog hass been bothering peobul. Usually she does not bark — very mooch. Here, Trixie! Come now to papa."

Trixie pranced about the big black trunk, yipping louder than ever.

"Trixie!" Mr. Brock cried, in a hurt tone.

Trixie ignored her master's voice. Brock finally strode over to the trunk. He poised like a wrestler, waited his opening and finally gathered the pup up in his big arms. The little terrier squirmed, still yapping.

"I take her home now," Brock said. "Something hass excited her. I ged her quiet."

"Yes, and see that you keep her quiet!" Ed Sullivan barked.

Brock fled. The two coppers turned toward the door, treading heavily.

"Look here, you two half-wits!" Katie said abruptly.

Sullivan sighed. "Come on, Pete. She ain't speakin' to us."

"I'm speaking to you," the Duchess retorted. "And I'm telling you, you'd better investigate that trunk. That dog hasn't barked at it a whole hour for nothing. If you ask me—"

"Is anybody askin' you?" Pete Freitas snarled.

"Yeah," Sullivan put in. "I'm askin' her—to keep her damned nose out o' other people's business."

But the two coppers had paused. Freitas turned his light back onto the trunk, held it there a dozen seconds, then flashed it around the basement. The beam came to rest on a light switch beside the door. Sullivan snapped it on and Freitas put his torch away.

The two officers walked over to the trunk, stood regarding it thoughtfully, finally walked around it, frowning. The trunk stood on end. I could see it wasn't locked.

Finally, without a word to each other, Freitas took one corner and Sullivan took the other. They yanked.

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The trunk flew open, the brass corners shrieking on the concrete floor.

The two halves of the trunk swung wide and left a man sitting on the floor, his arms clasped around his doubled-up legs, his head resting against his knees. A man in a gray suit. A *dead* man!

I heard Katie gasp. I caught her arm, said: "Easy, kid!"

And then the corpse, twisted from the ordeal it had suffered, topped over on its side. We could see, now, that the dead man's head was a pulpy mass of dried blood and matted hair. The whole top of it had been beaten in and, from the looks of the waxen face, the glazed eyes, I guessed he had been dead maybe a couple of days.

ED SULLIVAN took a deep breath. "Pete, hit a box and report to Captain Wallis. I'll go upstairs and see if anybody's home in this dump. Felton, the dame next door said their name was. Said they were out. Well, I'll take a look-see. And you two—" He gave Katie and me a glassy stare "—you two keep your mitts off everything. There may be fingerprints—"

"Skip it," Katie said. "We've been around, Pinkie and I."

"Yeah," Sullivan g r o w l e d. "Around and around, and you come out here. Why? I'd like to know why. A hunch? I doubt it."

"A dog barked, dearie," the Duchess said placidly. "And you know I love dogs."

The cops went out. I saw Katie eye the corpse and then look at her wrist watch. She said soberly:

"It's 10:35. I have an edition in five minutes."

"I have one in ten minutes. So what?"

"So the least we can do is to try to get an identification on this body. Will you do it?"

"No."

"Yes," Katie said flatly. "I'll keep watch at the door."

Well, it was taking a chance, messing around that way. But we, Katie and I, had taken chances before. She stepped outside the door and I ran my hand over the dead man's hip. I felt a wallet, pulled it out, opened it.

In the isinglass window I read: "J. C. Squires, 592 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, Cal."

I copied the name and address on a slip of paper, put the wallet back in the dead man's pocket, and Katie and I got out of there. We found telephones in a drug store three blocks away. We didn't have any facts, of course, but we had enough to hang a story on, a story that would sell plenty of copies of the theater edition.

Driving back, I said to Katie: "That dame said Brock and this guy Felton are partners. Maybe we can pick up something from Brock. Beat the dicks and the other papers. Sullivan and Freitas are too excited—"

"To remember what the old lady said," Katie finished for me.

"Right. We'll put the bee on Mr. Brock."

When he came to the door in answer to our ring, Brock wore a purple dressing gown and looked as big as Man Mountain Dean.

"Miss Blayne of the *Sun*," I said, "and Kane of the *Telegram*. We were across the street with those two cops when you came after your dog."

"*Ja?*" His beady eyes blinked at us. "Und so?"

"We'd like to ask you a few questions about the Feltons."

He started. "They—they haff nod been hurt?"

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"Nothing like that, Mr. Brock. May we come in?"

He stood aside, plainly reluctant. Katie and I walked through the short hall and into the small living room. He followed us, nodded us into chairs, said: "Und now, blease?"

"I might as well give it to you straight, Mr. Brock. You saw that trunk in the Feltons' basement. The cops found a body in it. The body of a man by the name of J. C. Squires, from Los Angeles. Know him?"

AT the word Squires I saw Brock's jaw twitch and his eyelids dropped three times, fast. Oh, he knew who Squires was, all right. But get him to admit it?

"I haff never heard uff the men," Brock said calmly.

"You can't recall that your partner, Mr. Felton, ever mentioned such a person in your hearing?"

"Neffer that I recall."

"You have had no business dealings with anybody by that name?"

"Nod any."

"What, may I ask, is your business?"

"We own the Felton-Brock Meat Company. You haff seen our markets, uff course."

"Yes, you have a chain of them. Started up a couple of years ago, didn't you?"

"One year und eight months."

"Made a big success of it, you and Mr. Felton, haven't you?"

Brock shrugged ponderous shoulders. "Maybe we haff. I am a goot bootcher. Mr. Felton is a goot business man. Together, we make a success. *Ja!* So?"

Well, I had a little, but not much. And I had a hunch I'd get no more from Mr. Brock, the "goot bootcher."

"So I guess that will be all," I said. "Thanks a lot, Mr. Brock."

When we went back across the street to 121 Bayside we found a dozen cars in front of the house and the basement full of men. Dicks, deputy coroners, police photographers, fingerprint experts, reporters, camera men.

I located Spike Kaylor, who covers night police for my paper. "I just phoned the office, Spike. Gave them all I had, including the identification. The Duchess and I, you know, were with the two flatties who found the body. Have the Feltons turned up yet?"

"No. The dame next door says they went to a show. Personally, I got a hunch they've taken a powder. And if they haven't scrammed already, they'll sure take it on the lam when they come back and see all these cars and coppers."

A voice from the doorway said: "If it isn't an intrusion, may I ask what is going on here?"

All activity in the crowded, smoke-filled basement stopped on the instant. Everyone turned, staring, speechless for the moment. Captain Wallis, who had been kneeling beside the body, straightened slowly.

A MAN and a woman stood outside the basement door. The man was about thirty-five, tall, even-featured, with steel-gray eyes and black moustache. The woman might have been seven or eight years younger. She was small, blond, more than passably good-looking. She had hold of the man's arm, and she looked frightened.

Captain Wallis broke the tense silence. "You, I presume, are Mr. Fred C. Felton."

"You presume rightly," said Felton.

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His head did not move but his steel-gray eyes swept back and forth over the basement. I don't believe he saw the corpse, there were so many men standing between him and the doorway.

"I am glad you have come," Captain Wallis said. "Perhaps you can tell me who this man is. Come in, please."

Felton stepped into the basement, his wife clinging to his arm. Her face now was dead white, her blue eyes wide, her lips drawn tight together. I heard Spike Kaylor whisper: "Guilty as hell!"

"Step aside, men," Captain Wallis ordered.

The men broke to right and left. And there, almost at Felton's feet, was the body of J. C. Squires. The dead man, now, lay on his back, his knees drawn up, his arms still clasped around them, his awful eyes staring.

Felton stepped swiftly in front of his wife, bent slightly, said:

"I never saw the man before in my life."

"Strange," Wallis said calmly. "Strange indeed. We found him in a trunk right here in your basement. Perhaps your wife might know who he is."

"My wife—" Felton began, and put his arm to hold her behind him.

But Mrs. Felton had moved to one side. She looked down at the dead man. Her eyes widened in horror. She screamed once, briefly, and then dropped in a dead faint.

II

WHEN I reached the City Hall press room a few minutes before nine the next morning (I cover day police for the *Telegram*), I found Willie Blake of the *Sentinel* and Pete Zerker of the *Bulletin* already on the job.

The Duchess wasn't there, but in the far corner, his feet propped on a desk, his hat on cock-eyed, a bottle of gin at his elbow, was Jeff Gervin. Now Jeff usually covers night police for the *Sentinel* and should have been in bed at nine o'clock. And Jeff, on this particular morning, had a decided cat-that-swallowed-the-canary look in his small beady eyes.

"Nice murder, eh, Pink?" fat Willie Blake said cheerfully. "Heard you and the Duchess had ringside seats."

"Yeah. What've they done with that guy and his wife?"

"They grilled them until six o'clock this morning and then locked them up," said Lanky Pete Zerker.

"Did they crack?"

"Not any."

"Who is J. C. Squires?"

"A Los Angeles airplane manufacturer."

Something hit me. Squires. Los Angeles. Airplane. . . . Squires. Los Angeles. Airplane.

"What's wrong, Pink?" Willie Blake asked hastily.

The words kept running through my mind. Squires. Los Angeles. Airplane. I almost had it when Jeff Gervin said: "Save the effort. The *Sentinel's* got the whole story. The first run's on the street right now. I recognize the guy and the dame as soon as I lamped 'em last night."

"What guy? What dame?" Willie asked blankly.

"Oh, read the *Sentinel*, lug," Jeff Gervin said airily.

I sat down limply, pretty sore at myself for being so slow on the pick-up. "The man's name isn't Felton," I said. "It's Fell. The woman is Mrs. J. C. Squires. She is, or used to be, a stunt flier in the movies, before she married Squires. Remember now?"

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Pete Zerker nodded. "It was two years ago. This Squires woman and Fell left Glendale airport one afternoon in her plane. They had dropped hints to several friends that they were tired of it all and that they were going to—"

"I remember!" Willie Blake broke in. "They were going to fly into the setting sun. Drop in the Pacific."

"Yes," I said. "And they were never heard of again."

"Until last night," Pete Zerker concluded, "when they were found living out there on Bayside as Mr. and Mrs. Fred C. Felton. As Jimmy Durante would say, 'Two years have elasped. He has grown a moustache and he's prospered.'"

"Until the dame's husband located 'em," Willie put in.

"Look!" I said hurriedly. "Do the dicks know who these people really are?"

"I just talked to Captain Wallis," Zerker said. "He isn't wise yet."

"He will be when he sees the *Sentinel's* first edition," Jeff said, as Katie came into the room.

She looked tired this morning. She had no smile for any of us as she went over to her desk, sat down and took the cover off her typewriter.

"Look Duchess!" Jeff started to ride her. "You seen the *Sentinel* to-day?"

She looked over her shoulder at him, her blue eyes cold and hostile. "It was excellent work on your part, Mr. Gervin. Can we let it go at that, or must we continue inflating your ego indefinitely?"

"Well—" Jeff began.

"AND by the way," Katie broke in. "Put this down on your copy paper, just as a matter of record. Mr. Fell and Mrs. Squires had nothing whatever to do with the murder of the woman's husband. How do I know?

"I've just come from an interview with Mrs. Squires. I've been talking to her for the last hour and she told me the whole story. How she was in love with this man Fell. How they flew away from Glendale. How she wrecked the plane in a cañon in the San Bernardino mountains and then burned it and covered the charred wreckage with brush. How they made their way up here, started life over again under the name of Felton, and how the man she loved made good, made a big success of this chain of cut-rate meat markets.

"And she swore to me that she had never seen or heard from her husband from the day she left Glendale until last night when she looked at him lying there on the basement floor."

Jeff Gervin guffawed, pounded his knee, thumped the desk. "And you believed her!" he bellowed.

Katie said flatly: "I believed her."

Jeff was still roaring with laughter. "Duchess, you always were a sucker for a sob story. That's the trouble with you newspaper dames. You can't keep the omniscient viewpoint. You feel sorry for the Squires wench, who is in a pretty tough spot, so you believe her when she sheds a few tears and tells you she and her paramour are innocent. Duchess, Duchess!"

"You think you're pretty smart, don't you, Jeff?" the Duchess shot back. "All right. You're a betting man. How about this one. I'll bet you a week's pay, your thirty dollars against my forty dollars, that Fell and Mrs. Squires are never convicted."

We all laughed at the look that came over Gervin's face. It burned him plenty that Katie made ten dollars more a week than he did.

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"That was a pretty nasty crack, Duchess," he said, glaring at her with tight lips. "The bet is on."

A little later, when Jeff had gone home to bed and the other fellows were upstairs checking the beat, I said to Katie: "Look, kid. That was a foolish bet."

"You think so?" she retorted coldly.

"I think so. You know, Jeff Gervin may be a drunk and a bum, but he's been kicking around a police beat for twenty years and he knows psychology. Just as he said, women reporters are too sentimental. You can't keep the omniscient viewpoint. You—"

"Would you mind, Pinky, keeping the omniscient viewpoint yourself?" the Duchess demanded. "I have a story to write and I'm tired of your prattling."

"Tired—of my— You go to the devil, Katie Blayne!"

LATE that afternoon Captain Wallis came into the press room. He looked about ready to drop; I knew he had been up all night grilling Fell and Mrs. Squires, and had been working all day on the case.

"I've just sworn to murder warrants against that pair," he announced, "and they will be arraigned on Thursday. We've traced the trunk. Found they bought it a week ago. We also found the insides, the drawers and hangars, in a clothes closet upstairs, where they had dumped them. And the only fingerprints on the trunk, besides those left by Sullivan and Freitas when they opened it, are the prints of Fells and Mrs. Squires. That's the works, boys. It's enough to hang the both of them."

"And what do they say?" the Duchess asked crisply. "Fells and Mrs. Squires."

"They say they bought the trunk to take a trip to Seattle. They say that the trunk was in the front bedroom, half packed, when they went to the theater last night." Captain Wallis smiled wearily. "They *say*—they are innocent. But I'm afraid a jury won't see it that way. And, incidentally, the coroner says Squires was first choked to death. Then the killer, Felton of course, beat out his brains."

"He was thorough, anyway," Willie Blake remarked.

"Too thorough." Captain Wallis smiled wanly. "That's all, boys. I'm going home now and get some sleep."

Late that afternoon I was sent over to the morgue to check the identification of a hit-run victim. I met Dr. Jan Steinmetz coming out of the coroner's office. Now Dr. Steinmetz is a private investigator, one of the best. The true detective magazines, which often write up his cases, call him the world's foremost scientific detective. Which may be stretching the truth a little, but not much.

"How's it, Doc?" I said.

"Hello, Kane."

"Got something hot up your sleeve?"

Lanky, thin-faced, shabbily dressed Dr. Steinmetz smiled and said: "Quite so. But not for the *Telegram.*"

"Why not for the *Telegram?*"

"Because I have been retained on this case by the *Sun.*"

"Which case?"

"Why, the Squires murder case, of course." Dr. Steinmetz went his way.

So the *Sun* was putting out good cash to investigate the murder of J. C. Squires. Our fiery little Duchess must certainly have done some fast talking to her close-fisted boss. And, more important from my viewpoint, she must have had something to talk

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about. I worried about it all the rest of the day.

III

I HAD my hat on, ready to go home that evening, when the *Telegram's* private office phone rang. Spike Kaylor answered it, said: "Andy wants you," and handed me the phone. Andy is our city editor.

"Yeah," I said into the mouthpiece. "It's six o'clock, and I'm hungry."

"Do I care?" Andy shot back. "Look, Pink. Got a little assignment for you this evening. You know this man Brock, don't you?"

"I buzzed him a bit last night, but I don't know him. Why?"

"Well, the business office is on my neck. Seems Brock is sore because we've given too much space to the Felton-Brock Company angle of this murder. Says it's going to ruin his business. He's been squawking to Carlyle. Threatens to quit advertising in the *Telegram* if we don't square things."

"Square things! Is it our fault his partner commits murder?"

"Anyway, I promised the business office we'd use a little puff story tomorrow. You know, how Brock started from scratch and built up this big chain of markets. You're pretty good at dishing the soft soap, Pink—"

"It's a lie."

"And I want you to see Brock tonight and work up something. Anything to pacify him and get the business office off my neck. That's all, pal. Tally-ho."

I rang Brock's doorbell at nine that evening. He came to the door in his purple dressing gown, took one look at me and said briskly: "I am very busy. Blease excuse me."

He started to close the door but I jammed my foot against it. "Hold it, Mr. Brock. I come with good tidings. The *Telegram* wants a story from you, a real success story. We can use a column."

He stood there a moment, scowling fiercely. Then he pulled open the door, said: "Gum in."

I went to the living room. It was in disorder. Suits, underwear, shoes, various articles of wearing apparel were scattered all over the place. Two or three half packed suitcases lay open on the floor. I paused, looked over my shoulder at the big man. In another part of the house Trixie was barking.

"Scramming, Herr Brock?"

"Vat iss? No! Ja! I go to Chicago to hire Franz Noelbaum, the great criminal lawyer. My partner is in trouble. No eggspence we will spare to prove to the vorld his innocence."

"Oh, yeah? Noelbaum comes high."

"We haff blenty money."

"You'll need it, pal."

I WAS ribbing him and he knew it. He was breathing too fast, his face was too red. His fists, like pink hams, were clenched. And all the time he was smiling, or making a stab at it, anyway.

"Trixie," I said, "must be excited again tonight."

"That tamn dog. She's a nuisance."

"Quite."

He had stopped trying to smile. I was afraid of him. I didn't like the look in his ice-blue eyes. I didn't like those big pink fists. I didn't like his 250 pounds of hard German-trained and German-disciplined body. I knew he could pick me up by the ankles, swing me a few times around his head and splash me against a wall. And I didn't want to be splashed against a wall.

And yet I had to find out an answer

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to the question: Why does Brock think he's behind the eight ball?

"If you'll quiet that dog," I said, "maybe we can get down to business."

"Business? Vat business?"

Well, that was the pay-off. You see, he'd forgotten already why I was there.

"This puff story I'm going to write. This column of free advertising for the Felton-Brock Company."

"*Ja!*"

"And Trixie?"

"Blease to wait here. I brain that tamn dog."

He opened a door and strode into a disordered bedroom. Trixie was barking at a closed door on the far side of the room. Brock, amazingly light on his feet for so big a man, ran over and gave her a boot that sent her sailing under the bed, where she lay whimpering.

Brock turned, saw me in the doorway of the bedroom. He paused, his sharp cold eyes blinking very fast. From the door at which Trixie had been barking came a muffled rap-rap-rap. Like a high-heeled shoe tapping against a wall!

I felt my stomach turn over. I took half a breath, like a sprinter in that split second before the gun goes off. Then I turned and dove across the living room.

I heard a guttural curse and the pounding of heavy feet. Then I stumbled over an opened suitcase and fell flat on my face. Brock landed on me like a ton, like two tons, of bricks.

He landed on me so hard, from a flying dive, that he rolled completely off me. And left me lying there with every atom of wind knocked out of my lungs, every nerve and muscle in my body completely paralyzed. For a moment that seemed forever, I couldn't move my little finger.

I lay there with my eyes half closed, and watched Brock spring to his feet. He took a step toward me and then paused. I could see him only from the knees down. I saw one of his big feet swing back. Had this big German *kicked out Squires' brains?*

All at once there was life in my aching muscles. I rolled over again and hopped onto my feet.

"You fool!" I yelled. "Don't you know this house is surrounded? One squawk from me and a dozen cops will be in your hair. Take it easy, you sap!"

IT was a pretty sick bluff, but it was enough to hold him for a few seconds, enough to cause him to look around in panic to the right and to the left as though he expected to see cops coming from all directions.

I reached behind me, caught up the telephone and yelled "Help Help! Help!" at the top of my lungs.

I was still yelling when he hit me the first time and knocked me flat. I kept on yelling until his big boot loomed in front of my face and exploded in a shower of red stars and I went out like a light.

When I came to, my head felt like an over-inflated balloon and the sweet-salty taste of blood was in my mouth. I raised up my hands and looked around. Two of the suitcases were gone. And so, thank God, was Brock.

I got up finally on my shaky legs.

Trixie was still whimpering in the bedroom.

I could still hear, faintly, that rap-rap-rap of a high-heeled shoe against a wall.

I found the Duchess on the floor of the bathroom. Her ankles were bound with cord. Her wrists were tied behind her. Her mouth was taped with

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adhesive. And her blue eyes were wide and frightened.

For a moment I thought of leaving her there for a while, just to teach her a lesson. Then I weakened. After all, she must have heard us scrambling around and me yelling for help. She'd been punished enough—for one night.

I cut the cord on her ankles and wrists and managed, not too adroitly, to get the adhesive off her lips. Then I helped her onto her feet and said: "You're lucky he didn't cave your head in too. What's the score, kid?"

"Where—where is he?" she asked weakly.

"On the lam. Do you tell me the score, or do you tell me the score?"

She swallowed, said haltingly: "Dr. Steinmetz found fingerprints — on Squires' throat. You know, that new —silver nitrate process."

"Brock's prints?"

"We didn't know. All we were sure of—it was somebody who knew—that the Feltons were planning a trip—and had bought that trunk. They haven't many friends. They gave us a list. We've all—the whole staff—been trying to get their prints—by various ruses. I drew Brock. Asked for him. Because—maybe I had a hunch. The coroner, you know, said only a very powerful man—could have crushed a person's skull like that."

"And you came out here and faced that big murdering lunk—alone?"

She dropped her eyes. She swayed a little, put out a hand against the wall to steady herself. I put my arm around her, most impersonally.

"I THOUGHT I was smart, Pinky. Everybody—at the office—thinks I'm smart. I guess—I've got them buffaloed." She laughed a little and then swallowed a sob. "I had some pictures—some shots that Lloyd made last night of the body. I gave them to Brock to look at—to get his prints, you know. And I talked to him—casually—about the case. But I guess —I was too casual. Too damned casual! All at once I could see him getting frightened. I could actually see terror coming into his eyes, Pinky!"

"Yeah. I saw the same thing a while ago."

"Then he seemed to go crazy. I don't remember much after that—till I was here in the bathroom—all trussed up like a Christmas turkey.

Abruptly feet were thumping on the front stairs and in the living room. I heard Katie catch her breath. I felt her start to tremble.

"Easy, kid. Those are cops. Come on."

We went out and found Ed Sullivan and Pete Freitas in the living room.

"Holy cats!" Sullivan exclaimed. "The Duchess!"

"And Pinky Kane!" snorted Pete Freitas.

"Turn over any old board," I said, "and we'll crawl out. Who knocked out the bridgework, Ed? Who gave you a pair of shiners, Pete?"

"The same crazy mug, prob'ly, that mashed your nose flat," Sullivan muttered.

"Crazy?" I asked.

"Sure. The big punk blew his top," Freitas told us. "Me'n Ed got the radio flash and pulled up here just as he was lamming."

"Of course," Ed said. "We didn't know the score. But soon as he sees us get out of the car he starts to battle. Thought he could clean me'n Pete. Huh!"

"He didn't do so badly," Katie said, smiling, getting hold of herself again.

"Well," Sullivan said, "we had to

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damn near knock his head off his shoulders to get the bracelets on him. And he never stopped babbling all the way to headquarters."

Headquarters, I thought! I've evidently been out a long time.

"Boy, he sure spilled his guts," Freitas said.

"Along what lines, muh franz?" I asked.

"Well, as near as we could piece it together from this guy's babblin', this Squires found out where his wife and Fell were. He wanted his wife to come back to him but he didn't have the courage to go to her or to Fell. So he went to Brock, thinkin' to have Brock act as a go-between."

"Brock had several meetings with him," Sullivan put in. "And then, in a burst of inspiration, he conceived his great plan. He polished off Squires three days ago. Then last night, when he knew Fell and the Squires dame were at a show, he planted the corpse in that trunk in the basement. And left his little dog—"

"That Trixie pooch that's whinin' somewhere around here right now," Freitas broke in.

"To stand watch—and to bark," Sullivan went on.

"But the motive, man!" I yelled. "The motive! Why did Brock want to hang a foul murder on his partner?"

"Because he was sore at Fell. Brock, you understand, was the butcher of the partnership. He got the idea that he was doing all the work and that Fell was only a bookkeeper—but a bookkeeper that was taking half the profits of the business. So he figured that if Fell was out of the way, along with the Squires dame, the whole chain of markets would revert to him."

"Nice fellow," I said.

Sullivan poked his tongue through the hole where his front teeth had been. "He packs a nice wallop, anyway."

There were footsteps on the porch and a familiar voice was saying: "... beat her this time, anyway. That *Sun* cub on the police beat is sound asleep. The Duchess is home in bed. And the *Sentinel,* for a change, is—"

And Jeff Gervin stood swaying in the doorway.

"Duchess, you win. Thirty dollars." He groaned, shook his head. "What a lot of gin I could buy for thirty dollars. What's the lay, Pink?"

I started to tell him and after a while I noticed that Katie had disappeared. She was back in a minute, with the whimpering little terrier in her arms. She looked up at me, smiling.

"I'm going to take her home. Didn't I tell you last night I liked dogs?"

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Vidocq *the* Great

He climbed over several roofs, lowered himself by a rope to discover them working at the moulds and the press

By Robert W. Sneddon

DFW FACT SPECIAL ARTICLE

It Took the Most Desperate Criminal in All France to Lay the Foundations of the Modern Parisian Sûreté

MONSIEUR HENRY, chief of the Emperor Napoleon's second division of the police of Paris, sat at a desk with bitterness in his heart. Two days earlier, the Prefect of Police, Pasquier, had seared his soul with reproaches. Paris was quite overrun with criminals. There were bold hold-ups in the daylight. Dozens of burglaries. Brigands were actually plundering within the city. Every day brought at least one murder. And nothing, insisted Pasquier, absolutely nothing, was being done about it. He must hold Henry to account. Henry must

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get definite results, immediately, or else—

Henry's bitter musings were interrupted by the sound of someone clearing his throat. He looked up sharply to see that a person had entered his office unannounced: a thick, pursy man in a loose, snuff-colored greatcoat, with drab breeches, white stockings on his muscular legs, silver buckles on his black shoes. With a bull neck and singular head—immense in the lower part, especially about the jaw, but tapering upward like a pear. The man had busy eyebrows, small gray eyes which glanced with the watchfulness of a cat's. The ears were pierced with small rings. And then Henry noticed with a disturbed sensation that his strange visitor's head was clipped bare to the scalp.

"How did you get in here? You are a convict." Henry demanded hastily. He reached toward the bell to summon his clerks—and help.

The man extended a muscular and hairy hand. "If you please, no," he interposed decisively. "I know you are a brave man, monsieur, and although my name might strike terror into the hearts of many, you are not of that number. You are quite right, monsieur. I am one of those unfortunates known as convicts. You may even have heard of me. My name is Vidocq, Eugène François Vidocq."

Henry stiffened. He was alone in a remote chamber with the most notorious and formidable criminal of the day, the hero of a dozen and more escapes from prisons and the galleys of Toulon and Brest, the idol of the underworld, a man of incredible ingenuity, intelligence, cunning and physical endurance who had crowded into his thirty-five years of life the adventurous experiences of a full score of men.

"What do you want with me, Vidocq?" Henry queried curtly.

Vidocq smiled. "There are only two classes in life—as in nature," he observed quietly, "the hunted and the hunters. It has taken me some time to realize that, of the two, the hunted comes off worst in the end—"

"Ah, a philosopher!" said Henry. He could not help smiling.

"If by philosopher you mean a man with common sense, yes," Vidocq answered, no way abashed, "and so, monsieur, I have decided to desert the ranks of the hunted and join the army of the hunters."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I am offering you my excellent services as a thief-catcher—a policeman!"

This time, the enormity of the fellow's impudence took Henry aback. "Impossible!" he said curtly. "What could you do?"

Vidocq eyed him slyly. "I could reestablish you in Monsieur Pacquier's good graces."

Henry bit his lips. He said nothing.

"I have means of unearthing gossip," Vidocq went on easily. "You may wonder how I came into your office unannounced. Do not blame any of your clerks unjustly. I have unique methods of entering and leaving any building, which are my own."

"How could you help me?" Henry repeated, somewhat ungraciously.

"I know hundreds of criminals. I understand their secrets. They trust me like a father-confessor. They ask my advice. I know the answer to a score of murder mysteries which are bothering you. I can easily forestall a hundred crimes already planned."

"Other convicts have promised as much," Henry grumbled.

"I can deliver the goods."

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"Your life would not be worth a sou if you were discovered to be a spy."

"It is worth nothing as it is, monsieur. Suppose you put me on trial. Send me to La Force prison on a trumped up charge and see what I can do."

Henry was finally won over. Vidocq doffed his clothes for the uniform of a convict once more. And soon terror began to reign in the underworld. . . .

Arrest followed arrest. Every other convict and criminal was suspected but no one traced the information back to Vidocq. When, twenty-one months later, it was learned that during his transfer to a different prison he had made another spectacular escape, his health was drunk in every criminal dive in the city.

Now at liberty—with the connivance of Henry, of course, who had placed his trust in him—Vidocq began his pursuit of criminals in earnest. He took his life in his hands. Both hunted and the hunters were now his foes. His fellow police distrusted him. As for his crook friends, as soon as his perfidy towards them came to light, he might expect a knife in his back at any time.

One day Henry called him in. "There has been a murder in Paradise Street. A middle-aged man—Jacques Viard. Find his murderer."

Vidocq found the slain man had been living like a miser in one wretched room although recently he had been left a large fortune by a deceased uncle. He had secreted the money in a hiding place under the floor. The plank was ripped up, the money gone, the owner's skull battered in.

Vidocq looked in vain for the lethal weapon or other vital clue. Suddenly, in one corner of the room he pounced on a glove. Monsieur Henry, who accompanied him, reached out, took the glove, smoothed it and held it to his nose.

"A woman's, eh? Monsieur Viard had his pleasures, eh? And one of his diversions murdered and robbed him. Here, find this woman."

Vidocq studied the glove a moment with a frown.

"This is a man's glove, monsieur, for all its perfume and its size. Let me see. There are only three gentlemen of the light fingers who might wear such expensive gloves. Of the three, the only one with a hand small enough to go into this glove is the Italian known as the Count Minelli. He has rooms near the Variety Theatre, Boulevard du Temple. Let us go there at once."

The stolen booty was found in the Count's room and thus, by way of the courtroom, Vidocq delivered the murderer to the mercies of Sanson, master of the guillotine.

PARIS was being flooded with counterfeit coin and bills. Vidocq promised that he would lay his hands on the forger. In a week, he turned up with the criminals; a gigantic shoemaker who still showed the marks of a battle which started when Vidocq arrested him singlehanded, an ex-convict and a doctor. He had climbed over the roofs of several houses, lowered himself by a rope to a window and discovered the men working at the moulds and the press. He had swung himself through the glass and cowed the trio.

One day Vidocq was strolling along when he felt a touch on his arm. He wheeled suddenly to confront St. Germain, a gentleman crook with a reputation as a man-killer. With him was his usual companion, a bowlegged butcher, Boudin.

"What are you doing now?" asked St. Germain.

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"Nothing," Vidocq replied quickly. "Lying low, dodging the police. I don't know what on earth will become of me."

St. Germain laughed. "If that is all that is biting you, I can fix you up. Come and see me, or wait—let's drop in here and crack a bottle of wine."

Vidocq followed, apologizing for his clothes and run-down shoes.

"Don't worry, you'll be rigged out like a prince soon," St. Germain promised as they sat down.

When the waiter was out of earshot, St. Germain leaned forward.

"We've got a little job, Boudin and I. We know where there's a safe stuffed with cash, but we need someone to give us a hand."

Vidocq acted as though unwilling to take the risk—then finally, reluctantly, agreed. He was to meet the pair in the same place in a couple of days.

When he went in at the appointed time, he saw the atmosphere had changed. The two men were cold and distant. They would not talk.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"The trouble is that we've heard you're in with the police."

Vidocq threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"Why—why—!" he wheezed. "So you heard that? Why I spread that story myself! I have a lot of so-called friends who would like to make a penny by selling me to the authorities, but if they think I'm a spy they won't bother."

He spoke with such conviction that the pair of crooks were convinced of his good faith. St. Germain then explained the job. The banker lived in a house within a walled garden at the corner of d'Enghien and Hauteville Streets. He was away at the time and the house was guarded by two servants. They had enlisted a third man, a cab driver to help in the robbery but needed a fourth, and wanted Vidocq.

Vidocq agreed, and rose to go.

"Where shall I meet you?" he asked.

"You don't meet us. You stay right with us till we pull off the job. Sit down, we'll go to my place in a minute or so."

Vidock showed no sign of his chagrin. He had intended to send word personally to Henry. Now there was no chance of that. He must devise some other scheme for warning his chief.

The trio hailed a coach, and picking up the fourth member of the party on the way, went to St. Germain's rooms in St. Antoine Street. St. Germain locked the door and pocketed the key. Vidocq knew he was a prisoner until they sallied out to the scene of the crime. He watched the pistols being loaded and knew St. Germain was ruthless enough to blow his brains out on the least suspicion. He saw Boudin sharpening two long knives. All at once he had an idea.

"It's dry waiting," he said. "It's a pity we haven't the Burgundy I have at home. No need to say where it came from, but a noble Duke might like to know. If you could get word to my wife, she'd bring a dozen bottles."

The vote was that a messenger should be sent to Vidocq's wife. If she came with the wine, there was to be no mention of what was afoot. St. Germain went out with a note which Vidocq had scribbled to his wife asking her to bring the wine, which he actually had, but had paid for instead of stealing as he intimated.

Madame Vidocq arrived with the wine, stayed but a moment or two. When she left she had in her hand a

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note slipped there by her husband in spite of the vigilance of the others. It asked her to get word to Henry, to disguise herself and follow them later to pick up another note if he could drop it unobserved.

The long hours passed. Vidocq saw that the third member of the party, the cab driver whose vehicle was to carry away the bags of gold, was not a confirmed criminal. Vidocq resolved to save him, and so, when they started off, he managed to give him wrong instructions as to where he was to wait while the robbery was in progress.

Vidocq, Boudin and St. Germain reached the garden wall. Boudin, with a couple of pistols ready, was over the wall first. St. Germain, also armed, followed him and Vidocq was astride the wall when there was a rush of men from the bushes, a brisk interchange of pistol shots. Vidocq toppled from the wall and played dead, and as the police led the two captured crooks away, he heard Boudin tearfully regretting his death.

II

WITHIN a few weeks, Vidocq had a score of St. Germain's associates under arrest and for the first time checked the wholesale thievery and destruction of property which had kept Paris in terror. There were no more street lamps taken away, no more lead stripped from roofs.

Then he went after the fences. There was a celebrated one, Cauchois, near the Notre Dame Bridge. The police knew he was a notorious dealer in stolen goods but had never been able to get evidence against him, or to discover where he hid his wares.

Vidocq made his plans. One day, after having waited for hours outside Cauchois's dwelilng, he saw the fence come out. He went up to him. "So this is where you hang out, Brother Grasset?"

"What do you mean? My name is not Grasset."

Vidocq winked knowingly.

"Of course you don't call yourself that nowadays, but you and I worked side by side in Toulon arsenal, with a little chain round our ankle. Brothers of the chain, we were. The police would be glad to know where my old pal Grasset is hiding."

The fence whined protests but Vidocq maintained he was an ex-convict. Finally, in desperation, Cauchois said: "They have my registration at the police station. They know me there. You come with me and I'll prove my name is Cauchois."

"That suits me," Vidocq answered.

At the station, he insisted they should search Cauchois. On his person three watches were found wrapped in a handkerchief. Leaving the fence at the police station, Vidocq hurried back to Cauchois' house and asked to interview Madame Cauchois privately.

He was taken into the house and to the fence's wife. "Shut the door," he whispered mysteriously. "Now—did you ever see this handkerchief before? Your husband passed it to me with a message. They've got him down at the station house—someone has squealed on him and the police are coming here—and he says for you to get everything out of the house at once."

"Oh, my soul! What am I to do?" wailed the woman. "There's such a mass of stuff here. It would take a wagon to move it."

"Leave it to me. I'll get three or four cabs. I'll be back in a minute or so—you get the stuff ready."

When Vidocq came back, he found the place littered with valuable goods, bales of silk and damask, clothing,

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jewelry, china, silverware—all being taken out of a room, the entrance to which was concealed behind a wardrobe. The cabmen helped to load up the cabs. Vidocq got into one of them with Madame Cauchois. The procession started for an address given by the woman.

All at once she leaned forward, looked out of the window and gasped: "This isn't the way! Where are we?"

"We're at the station house, Madame," Vidocq replied with a chuckle. "And here is my arm. Step out and join your husband. Three cab loads of evidence should put you both behind the bars!"

Towards the end of 1811, a new wave of crime swept over Paris. Scarcely a night passed without citizens reporting a dozen or more burglaries. Not a trace could be found of the daring criminals. They were very adroit and careful in their work, but one finally slipped and left a clue: a horse's feed-bag such as were used by cabmen.

Armed only with this clue, Vidocq started on the trail. At last he found the owner of the lost feed-bag, a cabman, Husson, whom he arrested. Husson squealed. There was a gang headed by two brothers Delzeve, the elder of whom was soon in prison. He too squealed and gave the names of the others of the gang, twenty-two in all, including one of the Empress Josephine's servants.

They were finally all apprehended except the younger Delzeve, known as the Crab.

On New Year's Eve, Henry said to Vidocq: "It's a great pity we can't get this fellow and round off the captures."

Vidocq rubbed his heavy chin reflectively.

"Tomorrow everyone goes calling. I wouldn't wonder but what the Crab would visit the little laundress, Celestine, he was so fond of. Give me three men and I'll watch her house."

They set out towards midnight on what was the most bitterly cold night of the year and took their posts. But after two hours the police could stand the cold no longer. They left Vidocq alone.

The hours passed. His feet were numb, but not his wits, and looking about him he found what turned out to be a most efficient way of warming himself, a pile of smoking manure. Dawn came and there was still no sign of the wanted man. It occurred to the manhunter that Delzeve might have arrived before him and spent the night inside. He recalled that the signal of the gang was a peculiar whistle. He put his fingers to his mouth and after two feeble efforts managed to make the shrill sound. He was overjoyed, on repeating it, to hear a window open overhead, and stretching his neck up he emitted a cautious greeting:

"Hey, is that you, Crab? This is the Chauffeur."

"Oh, is that you? I'll be right down."

The window shut. Vidocq extricated himself from where he was standing, cocked his pistol and waited. His imitation of the man who drove a cab for Delzeve had worked.

As soon as Delzeve came out, Vidocq leaped at him, seized him by the collar and subdued him. In a moment, he had his prisoner in a cab and as it was too early for Henry to be in his office, he kept driving about for some time. He then stopped the cab, took Delzeve into a cookshop, and gave him some breakfast.

Henry was in his office at the Prefecture receiving the greetings of his

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staff when Vidocq ushered his prisoner in.

"Many happy returns of the day, monsieur!" he cried. "Will you accept my New Year's gift—the famous Crab?"

Henry could not help showing his astonishment, and then his pleasure.

"This is indeed a New Year's gift. I am highly satisfied with your conduct, Vidocq."

His gratitude did not stop at words. He formed what he called the Brigade de Sûreté, a detective and criminal investigation service, with Vidocq as Chief at a salary of 4,000 francs a year. He gave Vidocq leave to select his force, six men in all, and all ex-convicts, including two notorious ones, Scheltein and Ricloky who became his lieutenants. The force was gradually added to until it numbered twenty-four in all, fifteen years later.

FROM this humble beginning in 1812, the year of Bonaparte's disastrous campaign in Russia, came the magnificent French detective service of today.

In the first year, Vidocq arrested 15 murderers, 108 burglars, 5 robbers with violence, and 500 criminals of other sorts.

It was a problem for his men to know when he slept. He seemed to be everywhere on the alert, at any hour of the day or night, always ready, dressed, close-shaven like an actor. And indeed he was an actor of remarkable talent, and a master of the art of make-up and disguise. He had a wardrobe of costumes of every rank of society, wigs and beards for every age. But his chief disguise lay in his ability to change his facial expression and his voice. He had a smattering of several languages and knew the characteristics of the various nationalities he could impersonate. In every way he deserved the name of Vidocq the Great. The great French author, Balzac, who knew him, took him as the model of his celebrated character Vautrin alias Cheat-Death, master criminal who became Chief of Police.

In his first years, the authorities took a curious attitude of indifference towards him. He had no office in the Prefecture but a dingy old dirty house in Sainte Anne Street where he lodged and fed his entire force. But it was from this decaying edifice that the law struck its most powerful blows against the criminal world.

On December 15, 1813, Henry gave him the dangerous task of arresting Fossard, an escaped galley convict, a man of gigantic build, who had sworn to do anything rather than be sent to prison. He never was without a pistol, carried in a handkerchief in his hand, ready to blow out the brains of anyone who accosted him.

"All I know about his whereabouts," said Henry, "is that he lives on some street leading from the markets to a boulevard, in a house with yellow curtains, and there is a hump-backed seamstress in the same house who is a friend of Fossard's woman."

"That is a tall order, monsieur," said Vidocq, wrinkling his brows, "but I will get Fossard for you, though it may take some time."

He went back to his own headquarters and sat down in the wardrobe room to think of a disguise. Finally he decided on that of a sporting old gentleman as likely to attract the favors of a seamstress, and it was as a whitehaired, florid-complexioned old man with a gold-headed cane that he set out for the markets.

He went through the streets ad-

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joining, one by one, gazing upward for yellow curtains, nearly run down a dozen times every hour. Wherever he saw the gleam of yellow, he climbed the stairs and knocked at the door of the apartment, hoping as it opened to see a seamstress with a hump. But though he found sewing ladies a plenty and some of them charming and ready to be hospitable, none of them had a hump.

When his note book showed him he had climbed the stairs of a hundred and fifty houses with yellow curtains, he was perturbed. A week had gone by. He kept on climbing stairs. On the twelfth day he decided it might be easier to linger outside shops and follow any hunchback customer home. His patience was rewarded finally and he followed the woman home, waited a little, then went up and knocked at her door.

He said he was looking for a gentleman and lady and described Fossard and his woman. He was curtly told they had moved. As no more information was forthcoming, he invented a story—he was the unfortunate husband of the woman—he was breaking his heart for her—if only he could see her again. The seamstress's sympathy was awakened, but she still maintained she did not know where the couple had gone. A porter had carried their goods.

Vidocq thanked her and began a canvass of the porters. He found the one who had carried the goods, got the address, and with a fake story got his informant to the police station where he jailed him so that he could not double-cross him by warning Fossard.

Disguised as a coalman, he watched outside the address indicated and satisfied himself Fossard was living there. He might have arrested him there and then but Fossard had his handkerchief with the double barreled pistol in his hand. He must try strategy.

He went back to his office, cleaned himself and dressed in ordinary clothes. The ground floor of Fossard's lodging was a wine shop. Vidocq went in, with an air of mystery he whispered to the proprietors:

"I'm from the police. There's a plan to rob you and I am here to warn you. The lodgers upstairs are in it. The woman has an impression of the key to the side door in the hallway. The bell alarm is to be cut. They'll creep up to your bedroom and cut your throats."

He succeeded in terrifying the wine shop owner and his wife and they begged him to protect them. Would he get the tenants out at once? This plan did not suit Vidocq, so he talked them over into doing nothing. There wouldn't be anything doing until after the New Year holiday when the till would be full of money. He would make his headquarters at the police station close by and be handy for any trouble.

At eleven P.M., the night of December 31, as in Delzeve's case, Vidocq, who had resumed his coalman's disguise with blackened face and hands, had made sure Fossard was in the apartment and his lights out. He and his men were admitted to the wine shop. Vidocq's idea at first was to wait till daybreak when the criminal's woman would go out for rolls and coffee, and they could get Fossard alone, but at once he thought of a better plan.

The wine shop owner had a ten-year-old nephew. Vidocq summoned the boy.

"Now, my lad," he said, "you'd like a little spending money. Here's

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a franc. Go up stairs, knock on the tenant's door and ask the lady if she could spare a little eau-de-cologne for your aunt who has a headache—a very bad headache."

He rehearsed the boy in what he had to say and sent him up, while he and his men, taking off their shoes, sneaked softly up after him.

The trick worked. The woman opened the door. Before she could say a word, Vidocq clamped his hand over her mouth and passed her on to his two men without a sound, darted into the room and threw himself on Fossard who was in bed. Before the criminal knew what had happened Vidocq had the cuffs on him. When a light was brought and Fossard saw the blackened face of his captor he was stricken dumb and gave up struggling.

Great quantities of jewels were found and ten thousand francs in cash. This sum Fossard suggested he should split with Vidocq and nothing be said about it, but the detective turned in the whole amount with his prisoner as another New Year's gift to his chief.

III

CASE after case added to Vidocq's fame. He began to be called out of town to assist local authorities, like the Mobile Brigade of the present Sûreté, and his first job was to strike at the Black Men. This Black Legion of the day was an organization which for years had terrorized a wide area to the north of Paris. Its members, with faces blackened, preyed on farmers and landowners, breaking down doors, pillaging houses, killing men and women who offered resistance, burning barns. Those of their victims left alive dared not give information for fear of further reprisals.

Vidocq disguised himself as a peddler and made his headquarters at the Swan Inn, in the village of Roseières, October, 1819. All day long he was on the road with his pack, gathering gossip as he sold or as he took a glass of wine here and there. At night, he prowled about in the woods. In two months he had the facts. The leader of the band was a bull-necked brute, Capelier, who kept an inn at Rainecourt with an old and vicious hag, Widow Guiraud, known as the She-Wolf.

Capelier had a daughter at whom Vidocq made a dead set. He would like to marry the girl if only he had a little cash. He let Capelier apparently talk him into carrying out three robberies—he privately made arrangements with the robbed himself—and by this faked evidence of his skill as a thief won the admiration of the band to which he was now introduced. They numbered sixty and were as capable as trained soldiers. It took Vidocq a couple of meetings to win their confidence. He was entrusted with the job of spying out the lay of a job of robbery of a rich old man who lived in a village in Bernay.

Vidocq returned and reported there was no danger and on February 25, 1820, Capelier, the She-Wolf, four of the gang and Vidocq were outside Old Dufay's house about midnight. All was quiet within. With a log, the door was battered down and in rushed the gang—into the arms of the gendarmes whom Vidocq had arranged to have in hiding. There was a desperate battle led by the She-Wolf whom Vidocq seized. She was seventy-two but she fought like a tiger and all but got away.

At the break of day, the other members of the gang, for whose arrest Vidocq had arranged, were brought in. There was a wholesale trial at which

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the She-Wolf and three others were condemned to death, and the others to life imprisonment. Capelier and his lieutenant, Vitasse, having died of wounds received in Dufay's house, escaped the offices of Sanson.

Shortly after this exploit, there was a public outcry about the number of highway robberies. The diligences or stage coaches were being held up every day, the mail bags stolen and the passengers robbed. Application was made to Vidocq to do something. Fortunately he was tipped off by an informer that the Lyons Stage Coach was to be held up but at what point of the journey he could not say.

One day in November when the Stage Coach—the Lyons Mail—left town, it carried among its passengers a venerable priest who hugged a substantial leather bag on his knees, and appeared to doze behind his large square spectacles.

The city was left behind. Scarcely had the coach entered the Forest of Senart than two men sprang from behind bushes and grabbed at the bridles of the two leader horses. Other heads appeared. Suddenly the other three startled passengers were amazed to see the priest whip two large pistols from his bag, dart to the window and open fire. One of the men at the horses' heads dropped. The other faltered, then ran. The coachman started his horses and they plunged ahead amidst a spatter of shots.

In the confusion Vidocq dropped out on the far side and slipped behind a bush. He watched the other six members of the band pick up their wounded comrade and examine him. They evidently thought there was no hope of his recovery and left him lying and groaning.

Vidocq had a good view of them. He was sure he could recognize them again. When they were out of sight, he came from his hiding place and advanced to the wounded man. He was taken aback when the robber, deceived by his priestly robe, began to confess his misdeeds, but he had no scruples about inquiring the names of his companions. Just then, the hackney cab which he had hired to follow the coach came along and, picking up the wounded man, he took him back to Paris and hospital.

Armed with the information, Vidocq laid hands on the rest of the band, fourteen men and seven women in all. The unfortunate informer, who recovered, when he realized what he had done, hanged himself.

All over town there were resorts where the police never dared to enter. Vidocq undertook to clear them out at the risk of his life. He could talk crook slang with the best of them, so after paying a visit or two in disguise to these haunts of the most dangerous criminals and keeping ears and eyes open, he used to go back in his real character with a few men. The men he stationed outside of the door and he himself went into the noisy, smoky rooms where an orchestra of two clarionets, a hurdygurdy, a cracked trumpet and a grunting bassoon provided music of sorts. Moving about, he managed to mark the men he wanted arrested with a piece of chalk on the arm. Then he suddenly announced all in the place were under arrest. There was a general rush for the door, and as the crooks passed out, those wanted were arrested without any trouble.

Vidocq had been told he would need a battalion of troops to do the job, but with eight men and his own fearlessness he did all that was required.

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One of his strangest cases was that of the man who called himself Count Pontis de Sainte Hélène.

There was a parade of troops passing through the streets. At the head of the seventy second regiment proudly rode its Colonel, Count Pontis de Sainte Hélène. One man on the sidewalks stared at him open-mouthed. It was an ex-convict, Darius, and he recognized in the soldier a man who had been his chained companion at hard labor in prison, one Pierre Coignard.

Darius followed the troops. He followed the Colonel to his home, thrust his way in and claimed him as his old companion. He was thrown out. Burning with indignation, he went to the police and the case was passed to Vidocq. It was a difficult job. The word of a convict against that of a highly honorable soldier.

IT would take many pages to tell how Vidocq made the identification of the impostor and proved his connection with a number of burglaries committed in association with his brother, who was acting as his valet, and several others of a well-organized gang.

There was a long and involved trial in which the so-called Count denied his identity with Coignard, but it ended in sending the defendant to the convict prison of Toulon for life.

Many a time Vidocq had to fall back on nothing more than his cunning to trap murderers under suspicion.

Called to the murder of a farmer in Montrueil, he could find no clue, no motive. The man had been shot down in his own house.

Vidocq went to the funeral. During the ceremony he studied the relatives. The dead man's son-in-law, Laizier, seemed to him to be more than ordinarily grief-stricken, and, to a cynic like the detective, this suggested something. He kept a watch on the young man but could discover no sign of guilt. Nevertheless, he could not help suspecting him to be the murderer. The farm was now his. He would have gained that much by the killing.

So strongly did Vidocq feel about his convictions that he made up his mind to make a test. He went one day to the young man with an air of triumph.

"All right, young man, I have good news for you. We've found the murderer—I've got him at the mayor's office now."

Laizier, who was eating his dinner, got to his feet.

"Has he confessed?" he asked.

"Just on the point of it. When he sees you, he won't have the nerve to deny he's the criminal."

"You want me to go with you?"

"Certainly. Hurry up."

Vidocq saw that the young man was confused, so much so that though the day was bitterly cold, he went without his greatcoat.

"Where is the rascal? Let me see him!" Laizier said with chattering teeth when they got to the mayor's office.

"Oh, I have the murderer here all right," said Vidocq. "Just step this way."

He led Laizier into a room and up to a large mirror. "Allow me to introduce you to the murderer."

For a moment, Laizier stared at his guilt-stricken image in the mirror. Then his nerve broke and he was down on his knees, clawing at Vidocq and begging for mercy.

It was only by cunning that Vidocq pinned the murder of a girl of the

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streets known as La Belle Norman on Guichet. The girl was found in her room strangled and robbed of her gold watch, rings and other trinkets, supposedly by a man she had taken home in the course of her profession.

The only clue to the identity of the murderer was that a girl friend of the murdered girl had seen her talking to a young man carrying a pruning knife.

Vidocq got hold of this girl, had her put on a quiet-looking costume. He himself dressed as an elderly well-to-do gentleman. The girl was to be his daughter, and they were looking for a young man to take care of the garden of their villa at Versailles.

Vidocq made a round of all the big gardeners without discovering anyone who looked like the criminal. Finally at the house of one, Guichet, the supposed daughter said she was certain that the girl who answered their questions was exactly like the young man she had seen. Vidocq found out that the gardener had two sons, both employed by him, one of whom lodged in Paris, but where no one could tell him. This one had the reputation of being wild. He, however, stayed at his father's always over the week end.

Vidocq had him followed, but the young man always dodged his trackers. So the great manhunter cooked up a scheme to get him. The girl's identification was not enough.

The first week end available, Vidocq had the district crier walk up and down the streets about the gardener's home calling a reward of one hundred francs for a lost spaniel. Vidocq, in a cab with one of his men dressed as a servant, followed. As he had hoped, the young man came out to listen to the crier.

Vidocq stopped the cab. His servant sprang out excitedly.

"Master!" he shouted, pointing to young Guichet. "There's the fellow who took the dog."

"Surely not!" said Vidocq. "He looks an honest young man."

"I swear he's the fellow who petted Mimi. He's probably got her hidden home."

"Let the young man speak for himself," said Vidocq graciously.

Guichet denied he knew anything about the dog but the servant kept up his accusation. "I know he has the dog hidden where he lives."

Vidocq let them wrangle and argue, then he stepped in suavely.

"Come, come, this is getting us nowhere. It is easy enough for you to prove one of us is lying, young man. Step into the cab, take us to your lodging, show us there is no dog there and I'll pay you handsomely for my servant's mistake."

He held out a handful of coins and, caught by this lure, Guichet stepped into the cab and gave the address of a mean street in the center of the city.

He led Vidocq and the servant upstairs into the single room he occupied. No sooner were they inside than the servant held Guichet while Vidocq searched the room from top to bottom. Stuffed into the toe of an old pair of shoes he found the watch and other jewelry of the murdered girl, evidence which sent Guichet to the guillotine.

IV

THE case of Madame Cardon was another which puzzled him. Though she ran a profitable business as a *traiteur*, sending out cooked dinners on order and had a large staff, she chose to live alone, on Grands Augustins Street. One morning, as she did not appear, her janitor went

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upstairs and found the door locked. Knocking brought no answer. The police were sent for, and later Vidocq.

The murdered woman had been stabbed with a dagger, but the weapon had been removed. The criminal had climbed up a rainpipe and entered by a back window to kill and rob. The cash box was broken open. There was not a single clue of any nature.

In default of any way of tracing the killer, Vidocq went after a number of those crooks who might have done the deed, but all whom he questioned were able to prove their innocence.

The Chief of the Sûreté was annoyed. No matter how many successes he had to his credit, an unsolved crime meant official reproach and comment in the public press. In these troubled political times, when dynasties rose and fell, he had to watch his step. So far, he had survived the passing of Bonaparte and Louis XVIII and the elevation of Charles X to the throne of France. But this elderly woman had such a connection with high officials that he simply had to get at the punishment of her murderer.

The crime had been carried out with such attention to the covering up of clues that it must have been the work of someone trained to criminal methods.

"Why I might have done it myself!" Vidocq mused. "The fellow used gloves—he saw to it there were no footprints—he came and went like a ghost. But as I certainly did not murder Madame Cardon, someone who knows my methods must have. And who knows my methods better than my own force of detectives? Suppose I look there."

He left off harrowing the peaceful days of other suspects and centered his attention on his twenty-four detectives all but Louis Canper whose honesty was never in question. He found one of them was spending more money than he was making and summoned him to his office.

"Shut the door, Joseph. You are sure no one can hear us. Now, where is my share of what you took from Madame Cardon?"

He saw at once that his shot had gone home and followed up the attack.

"You didn't think you could get away with the murder without paying tribute to me? Where is the cash? Be quick before someone comes."

Deceived by his attitude, the wretched murderer admitted the crime, thinking to buy Vidocq to silence. He was sadly mistaken. It was too good a chance for Vidocq to demonstrate his personal integrity and his expertness in police work, even at the cost of giving his force a black eye. Joseph was conducted to a cell at once.

In 1827, the manhunter resigned. There was a new Prefect of Police and Vidocq saw his freedom of action was going to be taken from him. Besides, he had laid by enough to give him a good income. He was, however, too active a man to remain idle, so he started a manufactory for paper boxes, employing only ex-convicts and their families.

Another revolution brought another king, Louis Philippe, and in May of 1832, Vidocq was once more in charge of the Sûreté. But by November, he was out of office.

Nothing daunted, he started a private detective agency, attached to which was the forerunner of the Better Business Bureau. In his advertisement, he offered to supply information about all who asked credit in business, or proposed any kind of busi-

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ness deal. There were 20,000 swindlers in Paris passing themselves off as bankers, merchants, commission agents.

"For twenty francs a year, I undertake to furnish such information to mercantile men who become subscribers to my agency. Those who do not care to make this arrangement will pay five francs for each inquiry or consultation.

He had showy offices, a large staff, and 8,000 subscribers to his service. All went well for years, then he got into trouble, was charged with blackmail, arrested, brought to trial, found guilty. He at once appealed his case and won, but he was financially ruined.

To get a little back, he went to England and lectured, showing his various disguises and relics of famous criminals whom he had captured.

With what he had made, he went back to Paris, but neglected, even by those he had befriended, the old lion —as he was called—died in want in 1857, leaving behind him nothing but his ever-famous reputation as the first of the world's great sleuths.

The Shoe Mark and the Stolen Silver

WHEN the proprietor of a restaurant in Paris opened for business in the morning he found to his horror that all the silver had been stolen. The police were notified. Upon arriving at the restaurant they found that the theft had been executed by mounting a chair to reach the shelf where the silver had been stored.

On the chair was a napkin, and on this napkin was the form of a shoe. The shoe belonged to the thief. The napkin was sent to the police laboratory and there the mud left by the imprint was carefully examined under the microscope. The predominant dust particles were found to be fecal matter. This meant the thief was of a low sort and was not particular into what he stepped.

The police then directed their search to a gang of scavengers who made a habit of hanging around the restaurant. Among them they picked up one Pierre Lassere who had a great deal of money in his pockets for which he could not account. A little pressure soon brought out a confession that it was he who had stolen the silver.

—*Edward Podolsky.*

Upon the question of RELIEF
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To put you on your feet
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Be Wise— Alkalize
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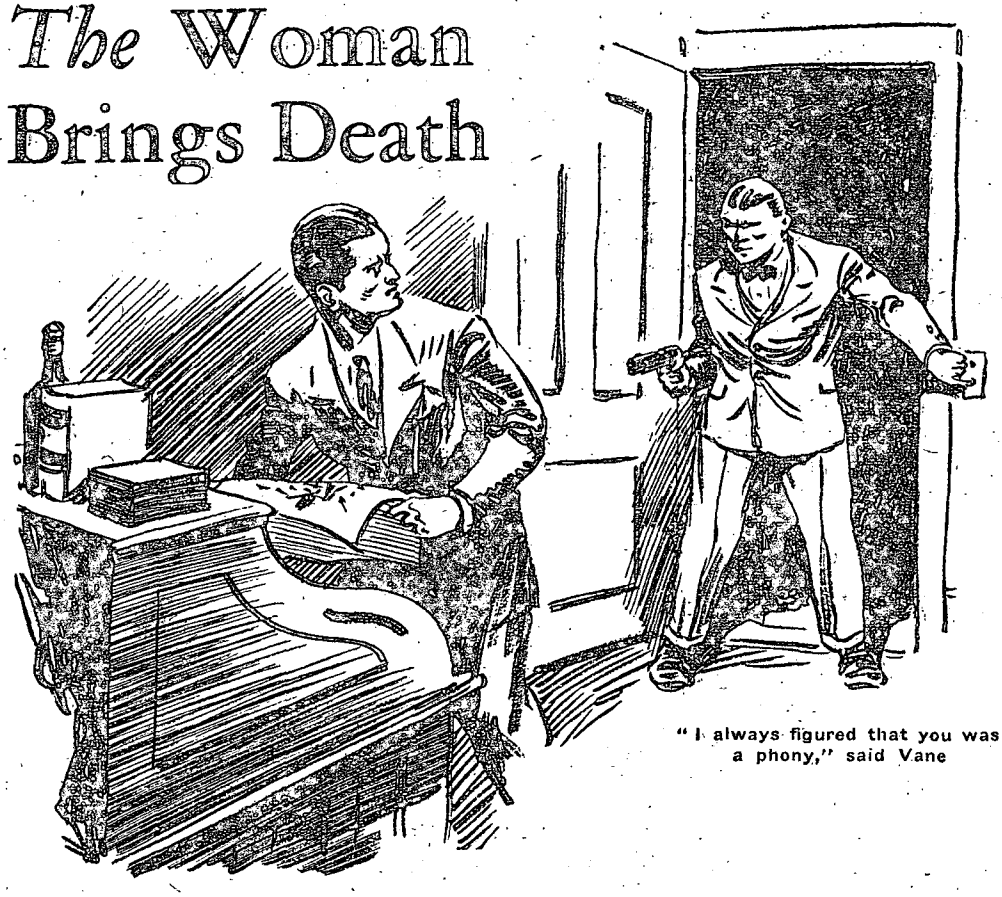
The Woman Brings Death



"I always figured that you was a phony," said Vane

By J. Lane Linklater

THE tall young man strolled carelessly along Third Street. The dark of the early evening shadowed his features. He wore his soft felt hat as carelessly as he walked. Even the slight smile on his face, glimpsed briefly in the flickering light of a street lamp, was touched with a gay recklessness.

Presently he reached a block of small stores. It was quite dark here, most of the stores closed. He slowed gradually as he approached the middle of the block, then stopped just outside a gloomy store entrance to light a cigarette.

A short man with shoulders like hams was leaning out of sight in the entrance. He stirred, but did not move from his post as the young man stopped.

"Hi, Dick," said

DETECTIVE FICTION SPECIAL AGENT SHORT WEEKLY

Dick Tarvis, G-Man, Was Cruising the Underworld on a Phony Passport as a Rod-Man Because He Had to Smash a Kidnap Syndicate. But There Was Lady Luck Who Had to Be Reckoned With Also

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the man in the doorway, his voice low.

The young man did not turn his head. He spoke with smoke belching from his mouth, in the same low tone. "Hi, Paul."

"How's things, Dick?" inquired the man called Paul.

"Moving fast," said Dick. "Tonight's the big moment, I think."

"Huber wise to anything?"

"Not," said Dick," "so far as I can see."

"Anything we can do?"

"No. Got to play it alone."

The man called Paul seemed to sigh a little. "Well, be careful, you damn fool, or you'll be playing a gilt-lined harp."

Dick laughed lightly. "Don't worry. Huber loves me. All his little boys love me—except maybe one. Even his gal, Flo, seems to love me."

"Yeah. Well, love sometimes turns to hate. And that gal is a she-devil." He paused. "Can we watch the house?"

Dick spoke emphatically: "No. If you did, they'd get wise quick. You all keep away. Just stick around across the street from that night bank."

"Okay," growled Paul. "But you better watch your step—"

"Someone coming. See you later, Paul—maybe."

Paul sank back further out of sight.

Dick Tarvis, federal officer, flipped a match into the gutter, strolled on. Three blocks away he took a taxi. He had the taxi zigzag about town for ten minutes, then got out. Half a block away he got in a small coupé.

He drove for almost an hour. He was out on a country road. A private side-road led back to an old farmhouse. The house was large, rambling. There were two cars parked at the back.

This was now the secret and temporary dwelling of Digger Huber and his boys. Huber's career had embraced almost every known form of violent crime, with kidnapping a specialty. Dick Tarvis knew that quite well. Indeed, he had been one of Huber's boys for several weeks. The law had nothing conclusive against Digger Huber on his past performances—but the law was figuring on the next one, hoped to be in on it.

THE minute Dick stepped into the house he would be no longer Dick Tarvis, federal officer. He would become Tony Santry, a lad who had come all the way from St. Louis with excellent credentials as a rod-man and cop-hater.

Because the man who had given him the credentials had died very suddenly since, in an encounter with the law, Dick felt fairly safe on that score.

He rapped on the back door. Presently bolts were drawn. The door was opened. In the dim light of a small corridor, a pretty face was looking up at him. The face was wearing a warm smile. But, as Dick knew from observation, the same face could freeze with cold cruelty.

"Hello, Flo," Dick murmured.

The girl's voice was soft. "Come in, big boy."

The door closed. The girl was close to him, clinging to him. Dick was still smiling. He knew this was hazardous; Huber wouldn't have liked it at all. And he knew that Flo wouldn't hesitate to double-cross him for her own safety; a treacherous wench. He wondered sometimes if she suspected him.

But just now she was enjoying a little side-play with the good-looking, happy-go-lucky rod from St. Louis. And Dick was playing the game.

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"Something for you," whispered Dick. "Cost me plenty dough, baby. But you're worth it."

He took a small package from his pocket and handed it to her. She slipped it in her dress, reached up and kissed him.

"Where's Digger?" asked Dick.

"In the living room. The boys are playing poker."

"Okay."

He slipped past her. In a large room near the front of the house, four men were intent on their cards. Huber himself, a slight man with thin dark hair and large blue eyes that seemed dreamy yet as cold and treacherous as floating ice, looked up briefly at Dick. The others—Fonna, King and Browley—didn't seem to notice him at all.

Dick watched silently as they finished the hand.

"Wanna sit in, Tony?" Huber asked Dick.

Dick shook his head. "Not yet, chief. Going upstairs. Be back soon." He paused a little. "Where's Vane?"

"Dunno," Huber said, laconically. "Went out for a little air, maybe."

"Okay, see you later," said Dick.

He went out to the hall, stood at the bottom of the stairway for a little while, in the semi-darkness. He was thinking about the absent member of the outfit, Vane. A surly, morose, quick-acting gunman, Vane was the only one who appeared to dislike Dick, even to the point of suspicion.

Dick ascended the stairs slowly, quietly. There were four down in the living room, playing cards. Flo would join them any moment. Vane, presumably, was out somewhere. That left the rest of the house clear.

Dick's room was at the end of the second floor corridor. But he stopped half way along, in front of another door. For a moment or two he stood listening. There was no sound; even the voices down in the living room did not reach him.

He tried the door. It was locked. He fished a key from his pocket, turned it carefully in the lock. In a moment he was inside, the door gently closed behind him. The room was in darkness. The rays from Dick's small flashlight shafted about the room, settled finally on a roller-top desk.

The top was fastened. With a pocket knife, Dick pried it open. There was not much inside, just a few papers, folded carefully and lying in cubby-holes.

THIS, Dick knew, was just a chance that might help a lot. Huber was one of the most secretive of mob leaders. Tonight, for instance, the details of the big job ahead were known, so far, only to Huber himself and the finger man, Fonna. The girl, Flo, might know something of the tail end of the job, but that was all.

But if Huber was secretive, he was also very methodical, left nothing to chance. It was quite possible that he had prepared some kind of a plan or layout.

Dick's fast-moving fingers explored the papers in the desk. Soon he had one laid out before him. He chuckled inwardly; it looked like the real thing. There was a rough map, with details and names clearly marked in. The map showed a large house, with grounds around it.

"The Graven mansion," Dick muttered to himself. "The Gravens have a seven-year-old kid, a boy. Must be they're going to snatch—"

There was a faint squeak behind him.

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Dick swung about just as the light snapped on. The man in the doorway had his left hand on the light button, while his right hand grasped an automatic. The man's build was burly. His eyes were sullen, the left one almost out of sight beneath a heavy brow that dropped low over it.

Dick smiled pleasantly. "Hello, Vane," he said softly.

Vane was silent a moment. "I always figured," he said slowly, "that you was a phony." He was looking at the paper in Dick's hand. "Now," he added, "maybe Digger will believe me."

"He might, at that," agreed Dick.

He glanced quickly around at a corner. Instinctively, Vane's gaze shifted, too. Instantly, Dick's hand was in his pocket. Vane cursed as he fired, but his shifting gaze had thrown him off direction. His shot cracked into the desk behind Dick. Dick's lead took Vane full in the chest.

The shots resounded through the room like mountain thunder. Vane was on the floor, squirming a little, then quite still. There was a moment of silence. Dick stood rigid for a brief second. The others would be up at once.

II

DICK moved quickly. With careful speed, he reached for Vane's coat collar, swirled him across the floor, left him against the desk. He stuck the map into Vane's coat pocket, in plain sight, then stepped silently back to the door.

Footsteps were racing up the stairs.

Dick was leaning against the door jamb, looking glumly across the room at the dead Vane, when Huber appeared with Fonna and King and Browley.

Huber glanced at Vane, then at Dick, with his peculiar enigmatic gaze, but said nothing, merely waited.

"Too bad, chief," Dick apologized.

"Yeah," said Huber, and waited again.

Dick shrugged. "I dunno what it's all about," he said. "I was going by to my room and saw your door was open. I just squinted in, and there was Vane. He was at the desk there, looking at a paper. When he seen me, he seemed scared. I didn't think anything was wrong—was just going to say 'hello'—but he yanked his rod and let go. So I had to do the same." He sighed. "Sure is too bad."

"Yeah," said Huber, noncommittally. "Too bad."

He stared at Vane, then again at Dick. Dick, watching him with veiled closeness, searched for some indication of what the mob leader was thinking. But Huber's face was dead as a slab of marble.

The others behind Huber were silent, wary. Huber stepped forward presently, bent over the body. His fingers probed Vane's pocket, brought out the paper. He looked at it, frowned a little, then crushed it into his own pocket.

He walked back to the door.

"Yeah," he said again. "Too bad. But I guess Vane was trying something. Too bad. Okay, boys. We'll go back downstairs."

They tramped out of the room. Dick was fleetingly aware that the others kept well behind and around him, that Huber had glanced swiftly at each one, that they were all watching him. But no word was said as they clamped down the stairs.

At the foot of the stairs Flo was waiting, her pretty face impassive. "What's the trouble?" she asked.

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"Vane," said Huber, "was getting into something that was none of his business. Tony here seen him and they had a battle. Vane got bumped." He smiled faintly. "Lucky Tony got Vane. It would have been too bad the other way around."

He led the way into the living room. Dick glanced at Flo as he passed. She was staring at him, but smiled as soon as she was sure that none of the others was watching.

A crooked little wench, Dick thought. And greedy. She had a way of taking everything that came her way—and a place to put it.

They all sat down in the living room. No one seemed to want to play any more poker. They just sat around. But Dick noticed that no matter where he sat, he was cut off from the door. No one appeared to be looking at him, yet everyone was watching him.

Occasionally Huber looked at his watch. "Okay, boys," he said suddenly. "It's about time."

They all drew closer to him. Flo had come in and was sitting near Huber.

"A big job this time," Huber went on in his placid way. "A two-hundred-grand snatch. The Graven kid. His old man's got millions. Fonna and I got it all doped. Everything's set." He paused, looked deliberately at Dick. "We got to leave Vane here, and take a chance on anyone finding him. When we get to the Graven house, Tony and Browley will wait in the car, out in the road. The rest of us will go in. A basement door will be left open for us. Me and King will wait outside the door. Fonna will go in and get the kid. It's all fixed.

"Then we'll bring the kid out, and beat it for the hide-out." Huber smiled faintly again. "Me and Fonna and Flo are the only ones who know where that is. But it's a good one. All okay?"

The others murmured their agreement.

They were all on their feet.

Huber was now talking to Flo: "You wait here just an hour. Then you take your own car and meet us at the hide-away. That means you'll be about thirty minutes behind us. Okay, baby?"

"Okay, big boy," Flo said. She kissed Huber, and again Dick reflected that she was a wicked little wench.

At the back of the house, they all got in a big, seven-passenger car. Dick was driving. No one had uttered a word of suspicion, but—if they were suspicious—they had met him in a good place. His hands were busy with the wheel, and they could all watch him.

Huber, sitting near Dick, issued terse directions. It took them twenty minutes to reach the Graven place. It was a tremendous house, surrounded by grounds darkened by trees. The car was stopped a hundred feet from the iron gate in front.

They waited, silent, tense, for a little while. The district seemed to be deserted, as fashionable districts usually are.

"Okay," Huber gave the word presently.

He, with Fonna and King, got out, walked along the tall hedged fence, away from the gate, obviously heading for some side entrance. In a moment or two they had vanished.

Dick sat at the wheel, puffing a cigarette. Behind him was Browley. Huber had chosen well in leaving Browley with Dick: the quickest rod in the mob, and watchful, alert. Neither Dick nor Browley spoke.

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IT wouldn't be long, Dick knew. Huber was a careful planner. He knew just what he was doing. Undoubtedly he had been working on this snatch for months, pinning down one detail after another, saying little to anyone, even to his own mob. It was unlikely that there would be any hitch in his plans. No doubt some one on the inside had fixed the lay and had everything all ready for him.

Dick, staring straight ahead, could neither see nor hear Browley behind him. But Browley's wariness was something that could easily be felt.

There was a wry smile on Dick's face. He was thinking of the necklace he had given Huber's girl, Flo. It was a nice piece of work, could easily pass for a two-grand article. Flo would never let Huber see that, if she could help it.

Softly scurrying feet on the sidewalk brought him up. Some one was opening the rear door. Dick knew that Browley was doing nothing except watching him. But the others were climbing in.

Huber got in beside Dick. The mobster's voice was as calm as ever. "Okay, so far. Head east, Tony. Out the Wexton Pass. Then I'll tell you more."

Dick started the car. He hadn't looked around, but he knew that in the back seat, probably bound and muffled, was a seven-year-old boy; an investment worth two hundred thousand dollars to Huber and his gang.

Flo, who would reach the hide-out thirty minutes after they did, would be used to take care of the boy, no doubt. But Dick doubted if that boy would be permitted to stay alive long; certainly not if he were able to recognize his captors. Huber was as coldly ruthless as he was secretive.

The Wexton Pass was a lonely stretch. They reached it with no sign of interception. Very quietly, Huber told Dick where to turn, again and again. It was an intricate journey, taking them well back into the foothills; mile after mile along rough roads, skirting wooded slopes, deeper into the wilderness. Obviously Huber had studied the hide-out problem as carefully as he had all other angles of the job.

For three hours they drove without a sign of another car, without seeing another human being. Then they reached a low house in a rough clearing; old, but recently gone over.

Dick stopped the car at a word from Huber.

They all sat quite still for a moment, and silent, until Dick spoke.

"You picked a good one, chief," he complimented Huber. "This place would be hard to find, even if you knew the way."

"Yeah," acknowledged Huber, briefly.

They got out of the car. Again, although there was no word of distrust, Dick noticed that three of the others, as they approached the door, hung close to him, one on each side, the other immediately behind. Huber himself walked ahead, Fonna carrying the human bundle, blanket-wrapped.

Huber opened the door, went in and turned on a light. The others followed. They turned off a square hallway into a fairly larger room, fitted up as a lodge living room.

They stood about for a moment. Then Huber spoke to Fonna. "Put the kid in that upstairs room."

Fonna vanished through a door with his burden. Dick sank into a chair. The others remained standing.

Huber spoke without looking at any-

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one in particular: "That's a good room upstairs. It's like a cell. Hard to get out of. Only one door. And the window is too high to jump from."

Dick grinned. "You think of everything, chief."

"Yeah," said Huber, complacently. "And that ain't all. It's high up, so it's good for signaling."

"Good idea," agreed Dick. "You can signal with a light, huh?"

Huber didn't answer. Presently Fonna returned. He, too, remained standing. Huber seemed to be glancing about, his dreamy eyes serenely somber. Then, unexpectedly, he looked directly at Dick.

"Well, Tony," he said, very gently, "so you're a G-man after all, huh?"

III

DICK TARVIS, alias Tony Santry, merely smiled. But inside he felt as if someone had reached a hand into his vitals and was squeezing them.

"You're kidding me, chief," he chaffed Huber lightly. "You know I ain't—"

"I ain't kidding you, and you know it," retorted Huber. "Sure, Vane kept telling me you was a phony. I didn't believe him, but tonight I let Vane watch you. That's why I told you Vane was out." Huber was talking in a quietly amused tone. "Vane was careless about letting you drill him. But I could see on the floor where you had moved him after you bumped him. And I could see where that desk was splintered, which means that the lead that went that way missed. So it must've been you that was at the desk, see?"

Dick nodded. He could see it very well. And it wouldn't be any good to try to talk himself out of it.

"Okay," he said, casually. "So what?"

"We'll take care of you," Huber told him, "when Flo gets here. Get up, Tony."

Dick was very still for just a moment. Huber wanted him to get up. Well, he might as well get up. He didn't have a chance this way. And Huber wouldn't stand for much stalling.

As he got to his feet, one of the others came from behind, frisked him carefully, took his one gun.

"You can sit down now, Tony," Huber said.

"Sure," said Dick, and sat down. He grinned his usual carefree grimace. "So you're going to bump me?"

"When Flo gets here," repeated Huber, placidly.

"But why wait for Flo?"

Huber broke into one of his rare chuckles; a low rattling chuckle. "Why do you think I told Flo to follow about thirty minutes behind us?"

Dick was thoughtful. "I get it," he said. "She'll make sure the road's clear!"

"Right," said Huber. "It ain't likely any of your boys would know how to follow us. They wouldn't know where to go. But if they did, Flo would be behind them on the way up. She couldn't miss."

Dick nodded again. Huber was right about that. "Sure," he said. "Looks like you win, Digger."

He got up, strolled about a little in the center of the room, the others all watching him. Outside, a wind was coming up.

He laughed abruptly. "So I got about thirty minutes to live, huh? Less than that now. Then you'll wipe me out! Okay, Digger. But some day they'll get you—"

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"Yeah. But sit down, Tony," cut in Huber.

Dick stared at him. "But why—"

"Sit down, Tony," Huber insisted. "You might as well. No sense wearing yourself out."

Dick sat down again. "Why, sure," he said pleasantly. "But I still don't see why I should have to wait for a woman so I can die."

Huber didn't seem to hear. Apparently, he had just thought of something. He motioned to Fonna. "Bring the kid in here for awhile," he said.

Dick's smile faded. He watched intently, but said nothing. The others waited silently while Fonna disappeared.

Presently Fonna returned, carrying the bundle, sat it in a chair. He looked at Huber. Huber nodded. Fonna proceeded methodically to cut ropes. The blanket unfolded.

The boy was partly stifled, only half conscious. He was red-headed, blue-eyed. His bare feet stuck stiffly out of his pajama legs.

Dick looked at Huber. "What's the idea of bringing the boy in here?"

Huber shrugged. "Just in case. If there's been any slip-up—well, the kid will get it first."

Dick frowned involuntarily. The boy was shivering, coming to. Presently he looked at his captors with boyish anger. He moistened his lips, jerked himself straight.

"Say," he piped up, "what do you guys think you're doing?"

Dick, in spite of his worry, smiled. Young Graven might be a millionaire child, but he was as human as any other seven-year-old.

Huber answered the boy indifferently: "You just keep still, kid, and you'll be all right—for awhile, anyway."

"Is that so?" The boy jumped up, stood in front of Huber defiantly. "You're a crook, aren't you? Well, you can't scare me. My dad will fix you—"

A quick blow across the mouth cut him short, sent him sprawling. The smile remained on Dick's face, but he felt sick. The boy scrambled up, yelling, and still fighting, made a rush at Huber. But Huber hit him again, knocked him down.

"Better rope him to the chair," Huber said laconically.

In a few moments the boy was bound to the chair. Dick watched him thoughtfully. He was thinking that Flo should be here very soon now. It seemed to Dick that, as he saw it, when Flo showed up, he, Dick Tarvis, *might* have a chance. *But the boy was facing quick and certain death.*

DICK'S gaze fastened on the door across the room, leading to the room upstairs. That room, as Huber had described it, was a prison; anyone in it couldn't very well get out. But at least it could be reached. Obviously, it would be hopeless to try for the outside door, but he might manage to make a break for the stairs.

Huber wouldn't expect him to do that anyway. If he made it, he would make himself a prisoner. But anything that induced Huber and the others to leave this room would give the boy a chance.

The stairway door, not a dozen feet away, was open.

Abruptly, Dick got up. At once the others were silently tense, alert. He strolled around in a small circle, widening the circle quickly.

"Sit down, Tony," came Huber's quiet voice.

Dick turned and smiled at him. He

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was close to the stairway door now. "Why, sure," he said. "Sure."

But instead he wheeled and dashed at the door. A shot splintered the woodwork as his foot hit the first step. Feet rushed at the door as he sprang up the stairs. The door of the room upstairs had been left open. He was in the dark room and had snapped the door shut before the first of the others was halfway up the stairs.

Dick breathed a sigh of relief as he found a bolt, grooved it into place.

The scrambling footsteps outside stopped. The house was quiet.

Then Huber was talking to him, through the door, unworried: "Might as well come out, Tony. You ain't got a chance."

Dick didn't answer. His eyes were trying to pierce the gloom. Huber, of course, was telling the truth. There was one small window, set high. No chance of climbing through, making the drop and getting away.

But the window might be useful for signaling others some distance away; useful to Huber, but not to Dick, since he had made no arrangements for signals.

Dick found an old couch along the side of the room, sat on it, gazed through the darkness at the door. There was nothing he could do except wait. He was unarmed, defenseless. And there was probably nothing that Huber didn't have in the line of ammunition.

"Coming out, Tony?" It was Huber again.

Dick said nothing. For a little while there was no sound except slurring footsteps. Dick sat staring at the door. It would be easy for Huber and the mob to break it. There was, indeed, only one thing that would make them cautious about it; the suspicion that Dick might have another weapon concealed on him.

Presently Huber's voice came again: "Coming out, Tony?"

Dick was still silent.

The silence broke in a shattering crackle. Dick slipped from the couch, lay prone on the floor. Machine gun slugs were smacking at the door. It was a light door, no very effective bar to that kind of a barrage.

The machine gun ceased its chatter. Huber's voice was as serene as ever: "Coming out, Tony?"

Dick lay still, made no sound.

There was a wait of a minute or so. Then something was crashing against the door. Dick glanced up. The blows continued, methodically, rather carefully. Someone was busy with an axe.

Soon there was a jagged hole in the center of the door. Huber's gibing voice was more distinct now: "Coming out, Tony?"

Dick didn't move, said nothing.

"Okay," said Huber, briskly. "You asked for it!"

Something came sailing into the room. Dick knew what it was at once. The thing struck the floor somewhere beyond him. He edged away from it, although he knew that wouldn't help for long. Tear-gas started to flood the room. Dick's eyes began to smart. He got to his feet, staggered under the impact of his own coughing. They'd be coming in after him, presently. He wondered vaguely if Flo wouldn't be along soon: that contemptible little wench.

Presently he was getting faint. He was on his knees, groping aimlessly, crouching, slipping. He knew he couldn't hold out much longer; a few moments, perhaps.

He thought he heard Huber laugh. And it seemed to him that the boy

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downstairs was yelling. Then there was a terrific din, and he wondered very hazily if Huber was turning the machine gun on him—

The man standing over him, in the air-freshened room, was short, and had shoulders like hams.

"Time you was waking up, you damn fool," said the man.

Dick grinned feebly. "Hi, Paul, How's things?"

"Okay. Got 'em all. Had to shoot some of 'em pretty bad. But we got the kid okay." He grinned as he helped Dick to his feet. "It worked swell, feller. We was waiting around, across the street from the night bank. That dame came along, and when she came out of the bank we tagged along after her. She led us right here. It was tough following her, but we made it."

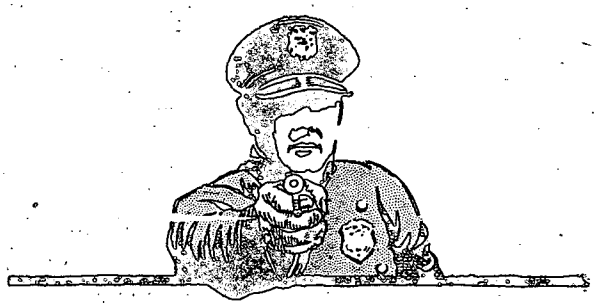
"Sure," said Dick. "I figured she wouldn't want Huber to see that necklace I gave her. She had plenty of time to stop in at the bank and stick it into her safety deposit box. That's where she put the first bauble I gave her."

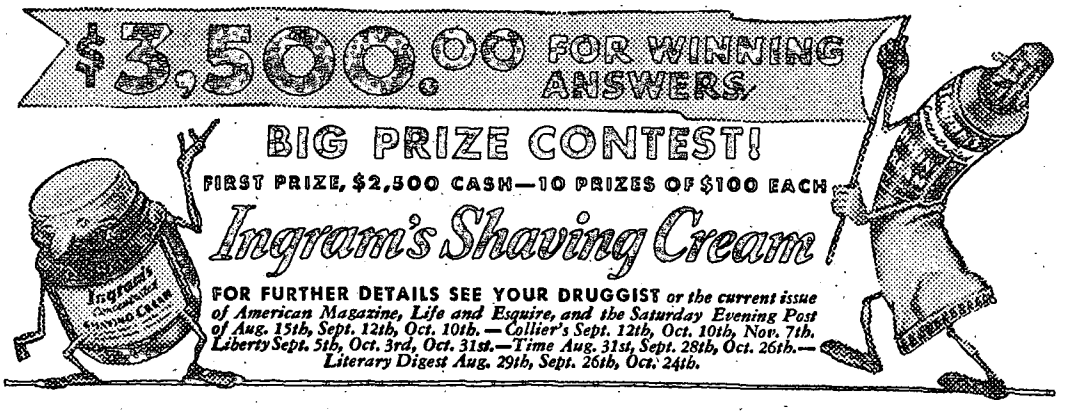
They stumbled downstairs. There were several people in the living room, but for a moment Dick saw only Flo. She was glaring at him.

Dick laughed gaily. "Hello, baby. How about another kiss for that pretty little present I gave you?"

"You guess the answer," snapped the girl.

Dick sighed. "Ah, well. I guess I couldn't expect more than one—for a seven-dollar phony."

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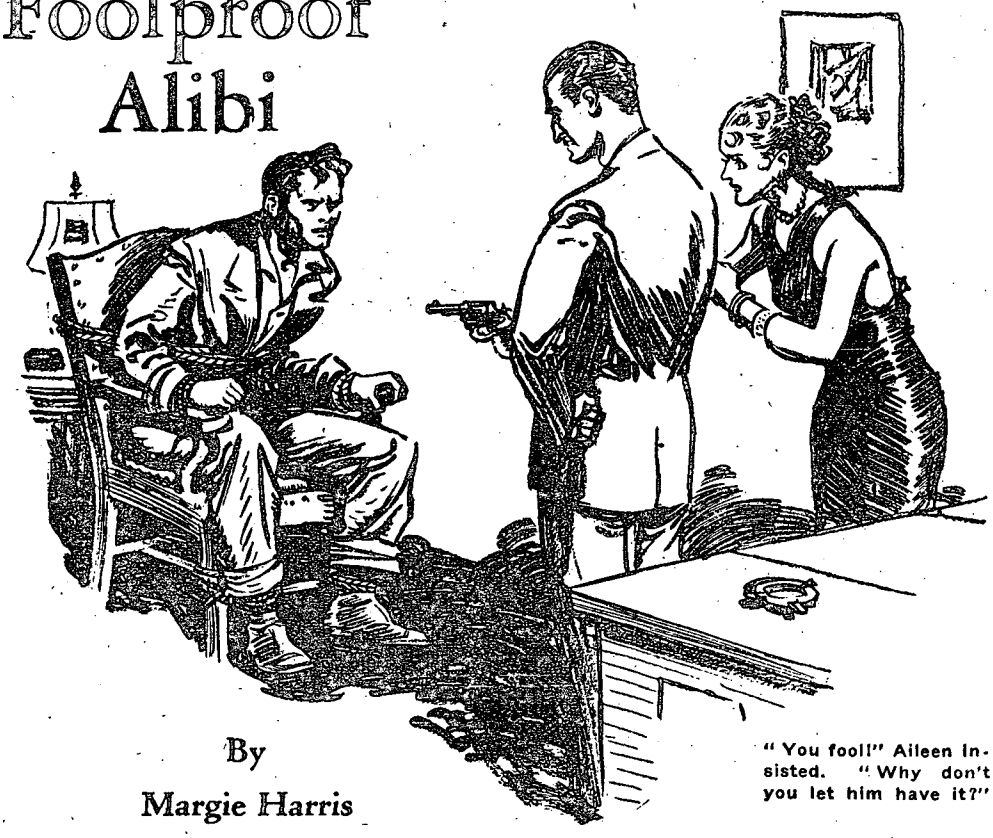
Foolproof Alibi



"You fool!" Aileen insisted. "Why don't you let him have it?"

By Margie Harris

Here's a New One: The Double-Alibi Which Crooks Believed Was Foolproof — and Then Detective Morgan, the Triple-Ace Threat from Headquarters, Happened to Come Along, "Rarin' to Go"

CHAPTER I

The Purple Pigeon

THREE pistol shots that sounded flat and muffled in the heavy snowstorm were suddenly heard above the street noises of Gulf City. They were closely spaced and sounded near at hand.

The echoes still quivered in the air when Martin Leroy, veteran of the Bank Detail, slithered around the corner of Avery and onto Milford Avenue, the city's principal north and south thoroughfare and business district.

Pedestrians were running toward the middle of the block where a still form lay half across the curb in the muddy snow. Above it stood a uniformed policeman, blowing sharp, warning blasts on his whistle. Cars skidded against the pull of hastily applied brakes. Somewhere near at hand a woman was shrieking hysterically. Her voice was a full octave lower but it was in tune with the note of the policeman's whistle.

As Old Marty broke into a lumber-

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ing run, the crash of fenders close beside him brought him to a skidding stop. He whirled, saw a brown coupé jerk free of a taxi, knifing away the left fender and bumper. It was lost instantly in the southbound traffic stream.

But for a brief moment he had caught the profile of a long, lean face, pasty in color, with a protruding lower lip and a sharp hawk's nose. Their eyes met, held briefly. Then the man at the wheel jerked his head to the right.

Marty closed his strange, green eyes for a moment, let the features register in his brain. Then he dog-trotted down to where a growing crowd already was jostling the solitary patrolman. He charged through roughly, calling: "Get back! Keep moving!" The patrolman said over his shoulder:

"It was a knockoff—out of a brown coupé—I think it's Lafferty, the policy king."

Two officers from nearby beats came up to aid in handling the crowd. Marty squatted beside the still form. A bubbling red-and-purple hole was in his right cheek; there was a soft, broken spot on the back of the skull where the bullet had failed to penetrate.

The victim was tall, well dressed. His gray, snap-brim hat beside him in the slush bore the initials "H.P.L." in the band. Marty nodded, called out: "Yeah, it's Lafferty, Highpockets himself—and a clean knockoff."

A younger man, big shouldered, ruddy of face with deep auburn hair and red-brown Irish eyes came and stood silently at his shoulder. Marty looked up at him slant-eyed, said:

"So what? You stayed to finish your steak, huh?"

His young partner blushed. "Someone said it was a murder; I stopped to call the precinct house and an ambulance."

Dale Morgan was twenty-six, a recent graduate to the Bank Squad after three years of pounding a beat. A copper—the son of a copper— he lived, breathed and dreamed police work. And all of the law-wisdom in the world was centered, to him, under the grisly thatch of old Marty Leroy.

"What's for me to do, Marty?" he asked anxiously.

"Just a bit of policing, Dale," the older man said tauntingly. Lookin' around for somebody that seen it: "you see, kid, they's been a murder—"

The flush returned to the younger man's face, but he showed no resentment. In a moment he was circling through the crowd, checking for an eyewitness.

The precinct detectives came and with them an ambulance. After that the headquarters homicide crew arrived. Marty, still squatting on his heels beside the body, felt a touch on his shoulder. It was Dale. With him was a pretty girl, blue eyed and with masses of crinkly blond hair.

"She seen it," Dale said in a half whisper. "She's—"

"Yeah, dammit," Marty rasped. "She's Dorothy Leroy, my brother's kid. You *would* go out and dig up some of my relatives for a material witness, you chump."

"Well, she did, anyhow," Dale said defensively. "I asked her and she said: 'Yessir, I seen it!'"

"One gets you two that she said, 'I saw it,'" a cool voice said at his elbow. The speaker was Gus Miller, *News-Argus* crime reporter. The girl studied him suspiciously, frowning at his levity.

Unconsciously she took a backward step toward Dale.

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MARTY got up scowling, put a hand on her shoulder. "Keep your mouth tight shut for a few minutes," he warned, and then crossed to the Precinct captain at the other curb, who said:

"Hey, Marty, were you on the spot when it happened?"

"Around the corner. But listen, Killand, I'm in a jam. My dumb kid partner has dug up an eye-witness, my niece, Dorothy, my brother's girl. I want to keep her under cover, completely out of it if I can."

The captain eyed him stolidly for a moment. He knew there wasn't much nourishment in bucking Marty Leroy; he was too close to the commissioner. And, anyhow, it would be a noteworthy change if a material witness could be kept completely under cover until the trial.

So he nodded at last, said: "Okay, Marty, but you'll have to explain to the Commish. and the D. A., if there's a squawk."

With a word of thanks Marty lumbered back to the spot where Dale, Dorothy and Miller, the reporter, were talking earnestly. As he came up he heard the girl say: "No, my uncle said for me to keep my mouth shut."

Marty cursed under his breath, shoved between them. "Nothing here for you, Miller," he said coldly. "And if you want it that way I'll ask the Commissioner to get together with your big boss. This girl is under cover, get me?"

Miller scowled. "So I'm to tell the managing editor that he's got a volunteer assistant," he snarled. "And get this, too: I'm reporting to the desk about this niece of yours; after that, it's you and the paper for it."

Dale nudged Marty briskly.

"Want I should bop him one?" he asked eagerly. "It would be hell for a pretty girl like her to get bumped off."

Miller, scowling, backed away a step. "If I didn't tell the desk, I'd get canned," he mumbled. "I've got a job—just like you bulls."

Marty nodded and shoved Dale.

"Get her the hell out of here," he whispered. "Take her home and tell my brother, Dave, she's to stay there." He turned to the girl and added, "And I mean it; no dates, no picture shows; just stay inside. I'd give my back hair, if you'd kept your mouth shut."

Dale took her arm, pressing it comfortingly. "He's kinda gruff," he said quietly, "but he's all to the good inside. And he's right about you. The dead guy's Highpockets Lafferty, the policy king, which means a gang killing, paid alibis, the big cover-up generally and probably death for witnesses."

The girl shuddered, pressed his hand tight against her side with her elbow. The arm was plump, pleasingly so. Her cloth coat showed curves where Nature intended them to be. When she looked up at the young detective, wide-eyed, he gulped like a schoolkid. Seemingly Dorothy Leroy had what was needed to make a newly appointed detective's heart go ga-ga.

Old Marty's eyes followed them to the taxi; then he plodded off to headquarters. He was in Identification when Dale returned an hour later, patiently thumbing over the racks of pictures in the rogues' gallery.

"You gotta hunch—a tip, Marty?" Dale asked.

Marty grunted crustily. "Just what'd the kid see, anyhow?"

"The killer, a tall, blackhaired fellow, with a gray muffler about his neck. Kinda horsefaced; she said she'd know him anywhere."

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MARTY cursed, slammed his palm hard against the desk-top. "I saw him, too," he said grimly. "And I'm going to get him, but do you see what that means? A jury won't take just my word; they'll drag Dorothy in, too, which'll be just the one thing the killers'll want. There's plenty of time between arraignment and trial for a lot of dirty work."

He got up and said:

"I'm going to see the D. A., and get him to shut up the *News-Argus* anyhow, and I think I'll ask the Chief for a man to guard her until the heat is off."

Dale started to speak, blushed rosily. Marty gave him one of his rare smiles.

"Might be a good idea at that," he mused. "You're dumb, but you've the same sort of guts your old dad always had. We'll see about it."

In a moment he was gone. Dale straightened out the racks, noted the final number on which Marty had been working. Then he pulled the lever that closed the curtains.

The telephone rang as he finished. It was the headquarters operator asking for Marty.

"Out," Dale said. "Any message?"

"Yeah; somebody's hot to talk to him. Says Marty's to be in the bar at the Purple Pigeon tonight to get a telephone call; it's a hot tip on the Highpockets knockoff."

CHAPTER II

Marty's Stamina

OLD MARTY turned away from the telephone booth in the night club bar and tucked a battered black memorandum book into the handkerchief pocket of his suit coat. In it he had written in his cramped, methodical handwriting:

"Miss Ellis, 2217 Leeland — sorehead—tip on Highpockets."

He stalked out of place, drew in a deep breath of the crisp winter air to replace the heavy, cloying odors of the club. His upraised thumb stopped a cruising taxi.

"I want to go to 2217 Leeland," he said gruffly. "Know it?"

The driver nodded. "Yeah, a hotcha spot where the sports and the sweet mamas hive up."

Marty chuckled. "I was afraid of that — and me with one foot in the grave."

It was a thirty-block ride to the ornate, overdecorated apartment building. Marty got out, stamped his feet.

"Better wait," he said. "Probably won't be long."

He went inside, looked briefly at the mail boxes. An automatic elevator took him to the eleventh floor. There he got out, looked about him, found the stairway and walked down to the tenth. No one was in the hallway; none of the doors were ajar. Caution, born of long years of police work, was appeased.

It was nearing one o'clock. 1018 was at the rear, near the stairs. He stood before the door, listening sharply for a moment. Knocking three times, he waited for an interval, added two more raps.

Soon he heard movement inside. The knob turned and someone said; "Who is it, please?"

It sounded like a woman with a deep-toned voice. Marty put his lips close to the crack and said, "The man from the Purple Pigeon."

An inside bolt clicked, a chain rattled and then the door started to swing open.

Marty's big shoulders bulked large in the doorway. His right hand was in

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his coat pocket, finger tight on the trigger. It tightened further as he saw that the inner hallway was dark.

But a pleasant male voice said; "Come in, Marty, you're among—"

The last word was lost in three sharp sounds like dry sticks breaking. Breath left the old detective's lips in a gasp like a pugilist taking the solar plexus punch. He swayed. Strength went out of his knees and let him fall with his right shoulder against the door jamb.

The angle was just right to pitch him out into the main hall. In a moment a tall man, in overcoat and hat, stepped out and drew the door closed carefully.

Marty's eyes were closed. His hat had rolled across the hall and lay against the baseboard. The tall man kicked him in the side tentatively, listened and watched for signs of life. When there were none he drew his hat further down over his eyes and tiptoed down the rear stairway.

After an interval of deep silence, Marty's eyes opened. He scowled at the electric light in the ceiling, let his gaze rove across to the door of 1018.

After that he coughed, gasped with the sudden pain it brought, put exploratory fingers over the next to last button on his vest.

They came away red. He grunted, with a great effort of will managed to roll onto his right side. From there he got to his knees and put the bloody fingers against the wall. Eventually he came to his feet.

Blood ran inside his trousers band, along his thighs to the knees. The slow trickle did something to his nerves, to set him for the supreme effort.

His left hand covered the close trio of bullet holes in his stomach with a fold of his overcoat. It seemed somehow that he was holding his whole body erect with that half palsied grip.

Scraping his right shoulder along the wall he came, at last, to the lift and touched the button. The cage stopped with a muffled bump, opened the door to him hospitably.

There was a difference of two inches in the levels, enough to send him crashing to his knees as the door banged shut. He got one hand up to the grillework and slowly, painfully pulled himself erect. Then a finger found the ground-floor button and the car flashed down.

Dark shadows danced before his eyes when the door opened. He leaned against the door-frame, crowding that supporting left hand tighter against the bullet-holes.

THE foyer was empty but it seemed to stretch away for miles before him. At the end was a glow of white light and a door—the door he must pass if his strength permitted.

In a niche beside the elevator was a telephone. For a moment he thought of using it. He cleared his throat tentatively and red-black smears danced before his eyes; the doorway began to jig derisively. He knew then that he must not talk.

At last, by some miracle, he was out in the street. The cold air braced him, but it slashed viciously at the warm red blood that welled past his fingers. Behind him, though he did not sense it, was a trail of crimson spatters.

His driver, watching in the rear-vision mirror, saw him and brought the cab clattering back with the door wide.

"You didn't stay—" he began, but fell silent at sight of Marty's face and the blood on his gray overcoat.

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"Head—quar—" Old Marty tried to voice the word through stiffening lips, but the third syllable was impossible.

He put out his right hand, groped for the edge of the door panel. He touched it but feeling was gone from his fingers.

After that he said: "Ar-r-ggg-hhh!" and slumped to the sidewalk. He was dead when the driver leaped out and knelt at his side.

After a moment the driver caught sight of the trail of blood leading back to the apartment entrance. He followed it to the lobby, took up the telephone and dialed headquarters.

"Meeghan, taxi shield 234," he said crisply. "I brought a passenger—a dick, I think—out to 2217 Leeland half an hour ago. He just came out, shot through the guts, and died on the sidewalk. Sure, I'll stick around; make it snappy."

HEADQUARTERS notified Dale that Old Marty had gone Through the Door, the unwritten police law that the surviving partner shall have first chance at the killer. He arrived at the scene almost as soon as the Homicide crew, eyes bleak with sorrow.

After a moment's inspection of the body, he removed the memorandum book from its customary hiding place and turned to the last entry, "Aileen Ellis, Apartment 1018." The others had not noticed what he was doing, so he slipped the book into a pocket and entered the lobby.

As he got out of the elevator at the tenth floor he came to a breathless halt. There was a pool of blood on the hardwood floor and the marks of crimsoned fingers on the smooth-plastered wall. He cursed savagely, covered the rest of the distance at a rapid pace. He found Marty's faded old brown fedora, another pool of red before the door of 1018.

He rang the bell furiously again and again, hammered angrily on the panels. Presently the door across the hall opened and a woman's voice said, "Miss Ellis is out of town; she left this afternoon."

Dale whirled. The speaker was an elderly woman in curl papers and a heavy robe of dark material. He showed her his badge, saying, "Police business," and asked huskily if she had heard any unusual noises in the hall.

Her eyes fell on the crimson pool before the Ellis woman's door. "Did she come back?" she gasped. "Is she hurt—murdered?"

Dale shrugged. "I've got to get in there; phone down for the janitor, please."

Instead the woman eyed him thoughtfully and said, "She left her key with me so I could feed the bird; I suppose it will be all right to give it to you?"

He thrust out his hand, said: "Hurry it up—and keep out of sight."

In a moment he had the key, was thrusting the door open, gun in hand. The only sound was the drip of water from a leaky tap, but there was the rank, biting odor of cordite in the air. A quick search showed that the place was unoccupied.

He knocked again at the neighbor's door and asked, "Just who is this Ellis dame anyhow?"

"I don't know. Someone said she was connected with the men who run the Policy game or whatever you call it. She gives a lot of noisy parties and her guests all look like—well, sports."

Dale said; "Let's take a look at the pictures in there." The woman fol-

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lowed, pointed out the picture of a bold-faced woman of thirty, with snapping black eyes and a hard mouth.

"That's Miss Ellis," she said, "and the man in the plush frame is the one she called 'Doc.' He came to see her every day."

He stowed both photographs in his pocket, said: "I'm keeping this key—that makes it fifty-fifty. I presume 'Doc' had a spare, too."

HE found the Medical Examiner just packing away his instruments in the little black bag.

"Three slugs," the latter said, "in a circle you could cover with a teacup. How he ever lived to get downstairs and out through that door is more than I—"

"Listen," Dale interrupted impatiently. "I've got to have one of those slugs tonight; can you fix me up?"

The Medical Examiner nodded. "He was your partner, eh? Okay, come along with me and I'll dig one out in a hurry."

Twenty minutes later Dale emerged from the dimly lighted morgue building, carrying a bullet wrapped in bandage cloth. He hurried to the ballistics room, requesting immediate comparison of the slug with that which had ended Highpockets Lafferty's life.

The experts ran the bullets through the double-microscopes, made microphotographs, presently handed over wet prints to Dale.

"There it is," they told him. "Both slugs were fired from the same gun: you've got to catch just one man."

Dale, eyes smoldering, his face white with repressed emotion, went storming in on Night Chief Frazier.

"Look at those prints," he snapped. "Identical bullets—one killed Highpockets, the other Marty. He saw the killer, told me so. There's another witness, Dorothy Leroy, Marty's niece; I'm going to bring her down to finish looking at the pictures where Marty left off when he went to the D. A.'s. office."

"Careful," Frazier warned. "She might get it too."

"I don't think so," Dale replied. "Only one person outside of the department knows about her and I don't think he'd dare leak, it's Miller of the *News-Argus*."

Frazier nodded. "It's your dice, Dale," he said slowly, "but if you make a bust I'm in the doghouse with Homicide. And by the way, you'd better break the news to his brother about Marty; the family hasn't been notified yet."

CHAPTER III

Smart Copper

SHADOWS lay deep in the block on Vine street, deepest of all in front of the modest bungalow home where Dale had left Dorothy Leroy early the previous afternoon.

But there was more. Across the street from the Leroy home, lights out, but with little spurts of vapor coming from the exhaust, was an automobile. Dale's watchful eyes caught the glow of a cigarette which proved that the driver was at the wheel. There could be but one meaning to that—danger to Dorothy.

He speeded on, made two right turns. He counted houses on the second street, stopped where an auto drive cut deep into a lot and through to a two-car garage. One stall was empty and light from the next street showed through a sliding window.

In a moment Dale was through and

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into a rear yard. A quick survey showed that he had overshot his mark: the Leroy house was the first at the right. Leaping the low hedge, he halted under a spreading tree.

The sudden squeal of a window being opened halted him in his tracks. After a few seconds he made out a deeper shadow in the darkness of the back porch, a shadow that moved, disappearing into the house.

He was on his toes instantly, running forward without sound. The screen door was open. Dale angled around it as a dim glow showed and went out. Someone had opened and closed a door somewhere ahead of him.

He went, ghost-like, through the window, covered his torch with his handkerchief and flashed the glow about. Before him was a door, after that the hall leading to the front. In a moment he was out there, flashing glances into the dining room and the living room adjoining. He closed his eyes, pictured the house as he had seen it from the front, figuring that the bedrooms lay to the right.

Halting momentarily in the doorway of the living room, he dashed on toward the right as a woman's shrill scream, sharp and terror-ridden, cut through the silence. It broke off suddenly as though a hand had been clamped over lips stiff with horror.

Instinct led him aright. He stopped just short of the door, lifted flash and gun and sent the beam ahead of him. A man's shoulder showed, the skirt of his coat and a bent knee.

The gun muzzle jerked and there was a flurry of motion. The man's leg lifted as Dale's slug tore through it, then came down with an audible thump.

Before he could fire again, a woman's body, clad in a pink bathrobe, slumped directly in the line of fire. Feet pounded the floor.

Glass crashed. Someone ran across the front yard.

Dale vaulted the prone body, at the window sped three slugs after the indistinct shape which already was over the fence and nearing the waiting car. Gears ground then, and the motor sounded a diminishing note as it sped off in the darkness.

A door opened behind him and Dale turned to see a bald head, a bulging pajama suit and a huge hand carrying a Police service gun. He spoke quickly.

"I'm Dale Gordon, Mr. Leroy. I just followed a man into the house—he was choking Dorothy. I wounded him but he got away."

He turned, looked at the still form on the floor. Together they got her onto the bed. After that Leroy turned on the lights and called his wife. Dorothy's face was wax-white. Her hair was in disarray. On her plump throat were the marks of three fingers and a thumb which had hooked deep into the tender flesh.

Dale spread a cold towel across the bruised throat for a moment, then began massaging her face gently with the cool fabric.

She opened her eyes almost immediately, staring in wonderment at the faces about her—at Dale seated on the side of her bed. Mrs. Leroy took her in her arms as she would a baby until calm returned to her.

"He—that man—" she murmured. "Tried—to choke—me."

She had little to tell—dreamless sleep, the sudden touch of alien hands—her scream and then suffocation. She had not heard Dale's shots, nor did she recall being thrown in front of the gun.

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SUDDENLY Dale uttered an angry exclamation. He crossed to the telephone, dialed the *News-Argus*, demanded Gus Miller's home number and then dialed that with vicious jerks at the rack.

When an answer came, he snarled viciously, "Listen, you damn' lying dog; you'll go for a one-way ride one of these days if you get smart with me. You tipped us to the wrong girl; damn' near got somebody bumped off."

"Wait a minute!" Miller's voice was shrill, fearful. "I said it was Marty's brother's girl; there's just one so far as I know—but the address I gave you was right."

"And the first thing you know yours will be 'Care of hell!'" Dale snarled as he tossed the receiver back.

That was the tip-off source—Miller, one of the few crooked newspapermen, allied with the killer crew.

Dave Leroy, green eyed and with Old Marty's square jaw, drew him aside.

"What is this all about?" he whispered. "That was just a burglar, wasn't it? How did you come to be out here?"

"How? Because Marty and Dorothy both saw the Lafferty killer; because I came out here to tell you that the same gun took Marty's life tonight, and because when I came here to break the news to you, I found a car parked across the street with the engine running. I came in through the back and found a man trying to kill Dorothy."

The news staggered Dave Leroy. His face blanched but almost at once the red glow of anger replaced the pallor.

"All right," he said grimly. "But God help the man I find prowling about here again." After a moment's thought he added, "Better say nothing to the womenfolk about Marty tonight; it'll be hard enough to bear when the sun's shining."

But Dale shook his head. "When the sun's shining, Mr. Leroy, I'll be taking Dorothy into danger—down to headquarters to see the pictures. Better tell them as soon as I'm gone, but be sure to watch her closely the rest of the night."

A LIGHT shone in Miller's room as Dale tiptoed down the hall, and Miller's voice could be heard speaking over the telephone. The place, a third-rate hotel in the downtown district, had proved easy of entrance while the night elevator man was at the top floor.

Holding an ear tight to the door panels he heard the reporter say: "But I tell you he *did* call, and he gave me hell. Sure he did, and he threatened me, said my address would be care of hell."

Apparently Miller was checking back on the call from the Leroy home, checking with the killer's outfit. Dale turned the knob, pressed gently against the door. It gave a quarter of an inch. He knew it then for an old-fashioned spring lock with the tongue engaging in a metal shield on the jamb.

Without more ado he swung his body out and back hard. The screws tore free, let the door swing wide. He went in with a rush that carried him across the room.

Miller, red-eyed and tousled, sat on the side of the bed. He was groping under the pillow with his right hand. Dale straight-armed him back, snatched away the pillow and tossed a loaded gun into a corner. Then he jerked Miller up only to slam him back again with a vicious right to the jaw.

The reporter covered his face with

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crossed arms, but snarled, "That's the sock that tossed you back into harness, smart cop! What's the idea of busting in here like this?"

"Get up, get into your clothes; you're pinched," Dale snapped. "And if you don't think I'd like another punch at you, just try some funny business."

Miller's face whitened, but his nerve held.

"Jake with me," he replied. "My paper's going to love this." As he got into his clothes, he asked, "Can you think up some reason for this stuff you're pulling?"

"Sure. For instance, your telephone call about the Vine street address you'd tipped off. A fine thug you turned out to be."

Miller went white, bit his lips to hide their trembling. He went down in the elevator with Dale quietly enough, but at the bottom braced himself against the door and shouted at the operator, ".Ten bucks for you if you call my paper and tell 'em I'm pinched."

Dale caught the Negro's wrist, showed him his handcuffs.

"Get these on, boy," he said grimly. "Then you can call and tell them you're both pinched."

The Negro cowered back. "Nossuh!" he shrilled. "You-all kin come in heah 'n' pinch dis heah whole ho-tel 'n' Ah wouldn't know nuthin' erbout it."

CAPTAIN FRAZIER was waiting at headquarters for news. He stared inquiringly at Dale, then nodded to the reporter and said, "You're out early, aren't you, Gus?"

"Uh-huh," Miller said ominously, "Starting a police shake up. This knot-headed copper smashed in my door, beat my head off and dragged me down here—and you know damn' well the *News-Argus* is going to like that."

Frazier looked over at Dale, stony-eyed. "I'm charging him with conspiracy in murder and attempted murder," the latter said briskly. "He was one of three persons who knew that Dorothy Leroy saw Highpockets Lafferty's killer. Marty and I were the others—and Marty's dead. Yet when I got out to Dave Leroy's place to break the news about the murder, a thug was in Dorothy's room trying to strangle her."

"And you figure it was Miller who gave out the tip?"

"I knew it, and to make sure I called him, gave him a fit for tipping off the wrong girl. He stuck to it that he'd been right; that there might be more than one niece, but that the address he'd given had been correct."

Frazier's eyes were blazing as he touched a bell. When a detective responded, he said, "Book this man under the name of 'X. Smith,' mark him 'Hold for Federal'—and tell the jailers I'll get the badge of the first man who speaks to him."

As Dale crossed the desk sergeant's office on his way out, he felt a bulge in his coat pocket and drew out the pictures of the Ellis woman and the man called "Doc." The latter had a cruel but intelligent face. The forehead was high, the jaw long and over-developed. The eyes were flat, expressionless, but somehow menacing. He dropped them back into the outer pocket of his overcoat and crossed to the squad car parked at the curb. Save for the two green lights at the entrance, the street was in shadow.

Suddenly, as he stooped to enter the car, something hard bored into his back and a voice said, "Be a nice copper now; put your hands behind you."

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Dale had no choice but to comply. He was off balance. Both hands were in plain sight and there was no discounting the gun jammed against his spine.

So slowly, sullenly, he put his hands behind them. Steel circles clicked about his wrists. He had been handcuffed—and expertly. The man behind him said:

"Get in, Snoop. You're going places—and you won't come back."

He swung forward to obey. Something whistled through the air with a slashing sound in a blow that brought blackness, bordered with red flashes before his eyes.

The impact carried him against the edge of the window at his left and the second blow helped to clear his senses. He was nauseated, his breath was fitful, but he kept thinking—thinking—until slowly the worst of the shock had passed.

He made no sound, let his muscles relax as they drew him inside and dropped him on the floor in the rear. Already the car was in motion, moving at high speed. The man above him called out, "If anybody gets in the way use the siren, George; nobody's going to question a police car this time of night."

"Okay," the other said. "And wouldn't it be smart to blindfold and gag that copper? If he lets out a yell, we're sunk."

Dale continued to play possum when the second man stooped and stuck patches of adhesive over his lips and eyes. Blinded and with only his ears for evidence, he lost track of their route, except to know that they were proceeding east — for the bells of switch engines on the yards were to the left, where lay North.

At last, after a fast turn about a corner, the car lifted as they ran into a driveway over a high sidewalk.

"He's still out," the second man said. "Give me a hand to get him inside; then take that police heap and ditch it."

After that they took off the handcuffs, got Dale's arms over their shoulders and towed him along, his toes dragging inertly through the snow.

Suddenly a door opened on squealing hinges and a man's voice said, "You got him, eh, the smart copper? Bring him inside, I want a chat with him."

They dragged him into a room, dropped him on the rug like a sack of wet sawdust. Someone came over to stand beside him, and to twist his head about with the toe of a shoe.

Dale was breathing heavily. The newcomer said, "He sounds like he's choking; get that adhesive off. We can't let him conk out on us here."

WARNED, he stood the three painful tugs that freed his lips and eyes. It was important that he play doggo, for under his arm still nestled his service gun. The two assailants, probably satisfied with the knockout blow with the blackjack, had failed to search him. So he still had a chance, if the breaks came his way.

A woman's voice said suddenly: "Why, he's just a young fellow; what's he doing partnering with Old Leroy?"

"He's old Dan Morgan's son," a cultured voice replied. "The old man was the king-bee stinger of them all in his day, and the department's trying to bring the boy up along the same lines."

"Too bad that he's lost his chance, Doc, isn't it?" the woman said unfeelingly.

"There isn't any choice," the suave

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voice replied. "There's no knowing what Leroy told him, so it's a case of over the jumps for him, too."

Dale opened one eye a mere slit. Six feet from him sat Eileen Ellis, the woman in the picture. There was no mistaking the hard, bold eyes. And to her right stood the original of the other photograph, the one she had called "Doc."

A telephone sounded a muffled note. Dale shifted his gaze, saw the man lift the leaf of a table desk and produce a telephone from its hiding place. After a moment he heard Doc say, "Hell, he's *got* to be there. The elevator boy told Mitchell that Detective Morgan had pinched him five minutes before Mitch came to see about some telephone message about which Miller had called. We picked up Morgan as he left headquarters, so it's a cinch Miller isn't in any precinct house."

He put the telephone back in its niche, slammed the cover down angrily, said: "Throw some water on that shamus; I want to talk to him."

Dale stirred, shifted his feet aimlessly. Someone came up behind him and drew him into a sitting position. He stared about aimlessly. After that he rubbed his lips with the back of one hand and mumbled:

"What's—how did I—get here?"

The second man took hold of his elbow and between the two of them they got him erect. He swayed, seemed about to fall. The blackhaired man said, "Where's Miller, the reporter? You took him from his room; where did you leave him?"

Dale said, "Headquarters," weakly, added, "And who are you?"

With the words he shook himself free of the supporting hands, hooking his thumbs in his vest pockets, but inches from the butt of his gun.

But the Ellis woman saw and interpreted the movement. "Watch his hands," she called. "Has he been searched?"

Dale ducked, went for his gun, executing a half sidestep at the same time. His hips struck the man behind him. Instantly an arm slid about his neck and another pair of hands clamped on his wrists. After that, a knee jammed hard in the middle of his back and the strangler pulled him off balance.

Helpless but fuming with rage, he had to stand there while the Ellis woman came over and removed his gun. While she was about it, she went over the rest of his pockets, finding her own photograph and that of the blackhaired man. She held them up, "Look these over and see how you like them, Smart Feller. They're from my apartment and God alone knows what else he found. Do you see what's to be done?"

"Surely, the first thing is to get that Leroy brat," he snapped. "It looks like we've got to do a four-way kill to make good what started out to be just one.

"Fred, you and Jerry tie our detective friend to the big straight chair. After that go over to Vine Street and get rid of the Leroy girl if you have to kill everybody in the house while you're doing it."

Aileen Ellis spatted her hands together. "You fool," she jeered. "Always telling everything you know and now you're popping off before this detective."

He smiled back at her meaningly. "The detective is welcome to know everything that goes on, Aileen. St. Peter won't be interested in what he brings along in the way of gossip."

The woman glared at him, "Then if

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that's the case, I'd do it now. Half an hour from now may be too late. Dead cops can't carry tales."

CHAPTER IV

Police Business

AFTER pinning Dale's feet tight to the rungs of a heavy, straight chair with wrap-around bonds, the gunmen brought the rope up about his waist and finished making him part of the chair. Then they went into the next room with Doc and a moment later Aileen Ellis followed.

Dale stared about him frantically. It seemed that he was helpless, yet he told himself that he must get free in time to warn Dorothy of her new danger. His hands were free, but the rope had been knotted in such a position that he could not loosen it. The woman had emptied his pockets when she searched him and had thrown his knife and other articles into a drawer.

The telephone! He looked about quickly. The Ellis woman had closed the door when she went into the next room. If he could get to the telephone, relay a message to Frazier, Dorothy might still be saved.

He set his hands tight about the broad arms of the chair, started swaying vigorously backward and forward. The big chair started sliding forward an inch at a time. Soon he discovered he could speed its progress by lifting with his toes as he strained against his bonds.

The table was six feet distant, but inch by inch it drew nearer. He panted with the exertion, driving himself to the limit of endurance. Perspiration ran from his forehead and made his eyes smart, but he never ceased the interminable weaving backward and forward.

At last it seemed that he had won. He cast a fearful glance at the closed door, then made one last, frantic dive. His knees collided with the table and in a moment he had thrown the flap back and the instrument was in his hands. Instantly a voice said, "Number, please?"

Dale told her, "Supervisor, quickly! Police business."

"This is Supervisor; what is it, please?" The voice was cold, businesslike. Dale replied:

"This is Detective Morgan, a prisoner at this number. I don't know the address. I want to talk to Police Captain Frazier at Police Headquarters—quickly."

There was no response, merely the click of a connection. Then in a second, a familiar voice snapped, "Captain Frazier speaking."

"Listen, Captain," Dale said in a half whisper. "Get a squad out to Dave Leroy's, 4100 Vine Street. Two gunmen are on their way to kill Dorothy."

"Four-one-hundred Vine, okay," Frazier answered. "Where are you, Dale; what's all the hush-hush?"

"I wish I knew," Dale said ruefully. "I'm snatched; they tied me in a chair and left me. I got to the telephone—"

"The telephone is at 1544 Edling Avenue, the subscriber's name is Mathis," Supervisor's cool voice cut in. "I waited on the line to tell you."

Dale said: "You've got the whole story, Captain. I'm going to try and work away from the telephone again—but be sure to look out for the girl. If they get her, we'll never be able to do anything about old Marty."

"Check, both ways," Frazier said. "The boys are on the way."

Dale dropped the instrument back into its prongs, closed the flap, and

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started hitching the chair back. But the rear legs curved outward and merely dug into the rug and held immovably.

Dale's heart stood still. Someone was talking now, just the other side of the closed door. In desperation he rocked the chair from side to side, got it over to the left on two legs, executed a spin that swung him free of the table. After that it was just rock, rock, rock, until he was back where he started.

Minutes passed, minutes in which he started breathing normally again and his hands stopped quivering. Then Aileen Ellis came in. She stared at him speculatively, looked around the room with the intuitive realization that something important was in the making.

Dale saw it, said impassively: "That's a nice place you have down there on Leeland; it made a nice trap for Martin Leroy."

She flushed with anger, called, "Doc!" over her shoulder. The black-haired man came into the doorway, one hand under his lapel.

"A wise-cracker," she said pointing to Dale. "He says my apartment was a nice trap for the old shamus."

"And wasn't it?" the other retorted. "But let him talk; he won't be around here much longer." He brought forth an old-style revolver, produced a silencer from another pocket and screwed it to the muzzle.

DALE watched his every movement, his face a blank mask. But inwardly he was fearful of death before his task was done. Somehow he must stall them off until Frazier and his crew came. He mustered up a wry grin, said:

"It won't get you much to knock me off—*Mathis.*"

He paused before the name, turned cold inwardly at the effect. The black-haired man's eyes shot fire. The gun muzzle came up, centered on Dale's forehead—then lowered again.

"You're asking for it," he said gruffly. "Well, Morgan, there went your last chance; you've got to kick off now. Where did you get my name—and what else do you know?"

Dale grinned at him tauntingly, "Your name? Out of your Sunday school song book. And I'm not the only one that knows it—*or that the gun you've got pointed at me right now killed Highpockets Lafferty and Martin Leroy.*"

Aileen Ellis ran across the floor, beat with her clenched fists on Mathis's forearm.

"You fool!" she insisted. "Why don't you let him have it? Don't you see, he knows everything. If he gets free, we'll all go to the chair."

Mathis brushed her aside with his elbow. "Skip it!" he said. "He's going to get the works all right, but I want to know a few things first." He turned back to Dale, "Where did you get the idea that this gun killed Lafferty?"

Dale frowned, pretended to consider his reply. At last he said:

"Tell you what, Mathis; I'm admitting you've got me, that I haven't a chance for my life, so I'll make a deal with you. Tell me what was back of your murder of Lafferty and I'll tell you all I've found out about it—and who is associated with you. I don't want to die without knowing the inside of it."

"I didn't kill Highpockets, Morgan, but I know who did. He got it because he'd brought in chiselers from Chicago. He'd crossed his own crowd in the Policy racket and was ready to turn it

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over to the others for a bigger cut. Now you answer one: how'd you find out about the gun?"

Dale nodded. "That part was easy. When they took Marty to the morgue I got one of the slugs and had it compared with the one from Lafferty. They clicked, down to the last scratch."

"But that doesn't explain how you figure this is the gun," Mathis protested. "It's a .38 but there are thousands in and about Gulf City."

"But not thousands owned by a tall, black-haired man, with a pasty complexion—*a man against whom we still have a living witness.*"

"Meaning me?" Mathis snapped.

"Meaning you—the gun'll burn you, with the identification to make it good."

Aileen Ellis called "Fool! Keep stalling and see what happens."

She crossed to a window, lifted the edge of the curtain and looked out.

She was back of Mathis, out of his sight, but Dale could see her every moment. Suddenly she stiffened, started to call something over her shoulder. In the same split second there came the crash of glass from windows at both sides of the room and a gruff voice commanded:

"Drop that gun—you—and stand up."

Plainclothes men came trooping through the windows, Captain Frazier at their head, carrying a sawed-off riot-gun. He caught Aileen Ellis by the shoulder, sent her spinning into the center of the room.

She tripped, fell across Dale's knees, knifing at his face with her fingernails as he went down.

Mathis, his hands well above his shoulders, seemed coolest of them all. Furtively he put out a foot and kicked the silenced gun under a chair.

"You win, Captain," he said quietly. "And you can have your funny shamus back; I was trying to find out what he'd done with a friend of mine—Gus Miller of the *News-Argus*."

FRAZIER told him: "You should have asked me; I knew all about it." He crossed to Dale, cut him free. Dale got up, stretched, worked his stiffened ankles, then went to the chair and retrieved the pistol. Wrapping it in his handkerchief he handed it over to Captain Frazier, saying, "Better take this along with you. Unless I'm mistaken greatly, it's the gun that killed Highpockets and Marty—and damn' near got me. Thanks for doing your stuff in time."

Captain Frazier signaled to one group of the detectives. "Take this woman down and toss her into a cell. We'll bring Big Handsome with us."

Aileen was white with fear and anger as she went out.

She paused in the doorway for a moment and cast a derisive glance at Mathis that was hot enough to sear him.

"That's right," she said tauntingly. "I told you that you'd talk us all into the chair."

Mathis donned his coat and hat, grinning sourly as Dale searched him for another gun. Then he turned to Captain Frazier.

"I don't mind going down with you if nothing else will satisfy you," he said evenly, "but I might as well warn you that I've got an alibi—a police alibi at that—on both of those kills Morgan has charged to me."

Frazier jerked about, glaring. "Police alibi?" he roared. "What in hell's that?"

"Merely that I was in a cell in Fifth Precinct waiting for bond from noon

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yesterday to a couple of hours ago. I was jugged on a D.A. complaint on a fraud charge; it cost me fifteen hundred megs to get clear. The bond's still over there at the station house."

Dale turned to the telephone and presently he was saying, "Morgan, Headquarters, talking. A man known as Doc Mathis, six feet, horse-faced, pale skin, dark eyes and hair—says he was held there fifteen hours on a fraud charge up to two hours ago. What about it?"

He listened attentively, put the phone down grimly. "The precinct lieutenant says it's right, Captain," he reported. "But that needn't bother you. I've a kidnap complaint against him—and on the way down I want to stop at Fifth Precinct and get a face-to-face identification."

Mathis, glaring, started to speak but thought better of it. Suddenly he was worrying; was it that his alibi was about to backfire?

But the identification stood up, so Dale insisted on taking him to headquarters and booking him on the kidnap charge.

AT Headquarters, they found Frazier's third squad, herding the two gunmen, Fred and Jerry, whom they had captured in the act of breaking into Dave Leroy's home. With them were Dorothy and her father, the latter rosily happy when Dale dashed across the room to take her hand.

"I have to thank you—for saving me twice in one night," she told him with a flash of her beautiful eyes. "I think you—"

Suddenly she paused. She was staring across the room, white-faced, her eyes glued on Doc Mathis who sat glowering in a corner.

"That man—" she said huskily. "Who is he?"

"It's Mathis," Dale said softly. "Do you know him?"

"No," she said at length. "At first I thought he was the man I saw in the brown coupé when that gambler was shot—but he isn't. They look alike, but this one's nose turns up at the end; the other's was straight."

Dale took both of her hands, held them tight to steady her.

"Look again and be sure," he directed. "It's life or death for him, you know."

Again she shook her head. "I saw the man's profile; the nose was straight as could be. I couldn't be mistaken, for I saw it against the background of a passing car."

Dale let her hands go unwillingly but not until she had moved them and had looked up inquiringly at him. Even then the implied reproach was tempered with a dazzling smile.

Excusing himself, Dale went over and whispered to Captain Frazier who said, "I want everyone to stay in this room until I release him; we'll have some more prisoners soon."

CHAPTER V

Sure as Death and Taxes

DALE, Aileen Ellis and Gus Miller faced one another in a witness room just off Captain Frazier's office. The woman was surly, defiant. Already identification had tagged her as a suspected blackmailer, and Doc Mathis as her confederate and an all-around chiseler.

Dale ignored her, turned to the reporter, who was biting his nails. He was white of face, trembling. Something of the enormity of his offense had come to his mind.

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"You know, do you, Miller, that you're in a spot?" Dale asked evenly. "That your provable connection with the attempt on Dorothy Leroy's life tonight makes you an accessory in an assault to murder; that your paper will wash its hands of you—because it can't afford to do otherwise?"

Miller stared at the floor. "I didn't —know," he mumbled. He was silent for a moment, then words eddied from his lips like water from a spring.

"I was taking Policy money," he babbled, "doing little fixes at headquarters when they picked up sellers in the streets. After that I split some dough with the makeup men to keep names out of stories—it's easy to lose a paragraph of type.

"You know how those things go—once you're in, there's no getting out. They kept demanding more and more as the days went by until I'd made up my mind to skip town before they got me in a real jam."

"Stop right there," Dale interrupted. "I want names. Who paid you?"

"Dan Higgins, the front man for the bunch."

"And Doc Mathis? You knew him?"

"I only knew of him—they never let me get to the top men. And Mathis was way on the inside."

Aileen Ellis stirred suddenly saying, "That's your neck, you know, stoolie."

Dale grinned at her amiably, said: "You'd best keep quiet, Aileen; you've got more troubles than you know how to handle." Then, to Miller, "Doc Mathis, then, is one of the big-shot operators of the Policy racket; you know that?"

"Yes, Mathis and a fellow named Mitchell; I got my orders from the latter. He's the one who paid me $2,500 tonight to tell him who saw the Highpockets kill. I was desperate, wanted to get away from town—it looked like the quick way."

Dale eyed him narrowly through a full minute. Then he touched a button and said when a brother detective came in, "Miller's got a statement for us. Have him dictate it and sign it; then hold him on an open charge until I release him. Be sure nobody gets to him for a talk until I give the word."

Then he sat down across a small table from Aileen and considered her appraisingly. She was badly shaken, but still defiant and still maintaining her hardboiled pose.

At last he said, "You're in a bad spot, Aileen. I've got the two gunmen who kidnaped me, and I've got you and Doc. There's the further fact that you both proved to be the ones back of my snatching and that you begged him several times to kill me. That puts you in line for the chair, particularly as you check as an accessory to the Lafferty kill.

"And frying isn't nice, Aileen. First they shave your head, then they put a metal cap over the bald spot, hitch an electrode to your bare leg—and when they let the thunderbolt loose it tears at your heart, your brain, your nerves and muscles. It shakes you, slams you against the straps until life is gone and you're just scorched clay."

She shuddered at first, fighting for composure, eyeing him levelly—trying to stare him down. But her eyes dilated, fell, at the picture of the shaved head. The final three words brought an involuntary shriek of horror from her lips.

"No, no!" she cried. "Oh, my God, not that!"

The words slid from her lips like an agonized prayer, as she covered her

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eyes with her hands as though to shut out the horrid picture. Dale, silent, watchful, waited for her to speak. At last she said in a tense whisper, "What is it you want, Morgan? I know you're playing me for something."

DALE took Marty's old, battered memorandum book from his pocket, with it a pencil. He held it before her eyes. "This is the book that Martin Leroy carried for years, the book that told inside things about his cases. Your name is there on the last used page—the record of your telephone call that trapped him to his death.

"Oh yes, I know you did that—it's down there in his own handwriting, but even with that black evidence against you, I'd be willing to trade your life for something I need badly."

"Anything—whatever you say," she whispered. "Anything—if only you'll let me go."

He handed over the book and pencil as he said, "Write—a name and an address—you know the one I want; the man who looks like Doc, the man who killed Marty. Do that, and you can walk out of that door—free of trial, prison, the chair—as soon as I've landed that man in a cell.

She literally snatched at the pencil, turning the book crosswise and writing on the reverse side of the final page. Dale took it, read and memorized the words, then tore out the page and burned it.

"You've told me nothing," he said quietly. "All of this is just between you and me. Now tell me, *who is this man?*"

"Doc calls him his alibi-man. Despite the resemblance there is no kinship. They've worked together for years, living in different cities, getting together when there's something to be done. One gets in a jam and goes to jail for an alibi; the other turns the trick and disappears. It is sure-fire and they've never even been suspected. Doc boasts that he's never been inside a cell except when he framed it to go there."

Dale said: "You wait right here until I come back and don't talk to anybody," and then turned to the door. Back in Frazier's office he whispered:

"I'm turning Miller loose as soon as I do some checking; that'll ease things with the *News-Argus*. The Ellis girl has given me the name and address of the man who killed Marty; I'm starting after him now. If she's played square, we've got to spring her, too."

Frazier said: "Me, too, Dale; I'm going to have a chunk of that with you. If you go alone you'll probably come back lugging a corpse full of police bullets."

Shaking his head stubbornly, Dale replied: "I'm going to get a couple of dumb precinct men; they'll do for what I need and anyhow it's just a one-man job."

Then he was gone, straight-backed and eager; gone for the man whose slug had laid Old Marty low.

THE proprietor of the Armitage Residences, who acted as his own manager as well, scowled and held his robe close about him as he confronted Dale in the living room of his elaborate suite on the ground floor of the swanky apartment building.

"What you say is ridiculous," he grumbled. "Mr. Boyer is a Chicago capitalist; Mrs. Boyer is a lady. Wouldn't it be a good idea for you to select some more probable scapegoats?"

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A red gleam of anger came to Dale's eyes. He caught the man's wrists, backed him to a thudding halt against the wall.

"Listen to me," he demanded. "If you don't change your tune, you'll be on your way to jail in ten seconds. Boyer's a crook and a killer. I came to take him out quietly; if you want real publicity for your place, just keep on getting in my way."

The other man hung his head. "I'll do what you wish," he said sullenly, "but try to prevent any disturbance."

Dale went back to the door, called in two waiting bluecoats. "You big chap, go to the roof and shoot anyone who tries to get away up there, and you, Irish, stick along with this bird here. If he does what I say, he's okay. But if he makes one phony move, slam him in the hoosegow and hold him as a material witness for murder."

"You understand?" he said to the cowed owner. "You go with me to 1109. Tell them it's police business and to keep quiet. When I come out we'll go to 1009 and after that you go with Casey. If and when I come back you'll be okay."

At the door of the eleventh floor apartment, Dale showed his badge.

"I'm here to get a two-time murderer on the floor below," he explained. "You folks can go back to bed, but I've got to do some pottering in your bathroom."

HE brushed past them, went to the bathroom and started prying tile up with his pocket jimmy. He bared a pipe, gashed a hole in it, watched the water start to seep through to the rooms below.

That done he rejoined Casey and the manager in the hall, entered the elevator which was waiting. The boy closed the door and Dale, unwrapping two sizable parcels, proceeded to array himself in a grease spotted coat, torn shirt and coveralls. An old cap completed the disguise.

Then he swung a canvas tool grip from his shoulder by a broad leather strap and they dropped down to apartment 1009. Dale motioned Casey down to the end of the hall and said to the manager: "You're going good so far; don't make any breaks now."

When they had rung the bell for the third time, a sleepy voice answered, "All right; what's wanted?"

Dale jabbed the manager with his thumb, scowled at him threateningly. "The manager, Mr. Boyer," he said. "There's a bad leak upstairs and it's running down into your bath. I have a plumber here, to fix it before the place is ruined. Sorry, but it's necessary."

There was a pause. Dale thought he heard whispered words back of the door, but at last the lock clicked and it swung open. The tenant had stepped back several feet, and his right hand was buried in the pocket of his robe.

Dale saw that he was a tall man, dark, with lantern jaw, glittering eyes —and a tip-tilted nose. But without a word he swung his tools down over his arm and thrust past the man. There was a second figure back there in the darkness, seemingly a woman in a light-colored robe.

The manager continued to apologize. With the words, "I'm sure it won't be long, Mr. Boyer," he backed away and the door closed.

In the bathroom Dale turned on the lights, opened his tool bag, set a bath stool in the tub and clambered up to prod at the place where water already was leaking down in a steady stream. He got down again, found packing and

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an iron rod with a thick base and fluted point, and got up again on the stool.

For a moment he dug away at the soggy plaster, seemingly engrossed in his work, but all of his senses were alert. He knew when a shadowy figure came into the outer room to stand watching him—and when that one left, apparently satisfied.

But within a moment or so there was a new sound, the scuffing of leather slippers against hard wood. He flashed a glance behind him, saw the grinning face, cavernous eyes of the man called Boyer.

"Smart, Mr. Detective Morgan," Boyer said, flicking his gun muzzle up to cover Dale's head. "Very smart, I'd say, but still not smart enough to get by me."

Dale looked down at him coolly. "You're cornered," he said grimly. "I did it this way to save bloodshed if possible. So you'd better put your gun up and come along quietly; the hall's full of police."

BOYER told him: "Maybe so, but you won't be around to see the pinch. Keep your hands up where they are, Shamus, and step down off that stool. I'd advise you not to try any smart tricks, for as far as I know, you're just a fake plumber who tricked his way in here to hijack me."

For an answer, Dale opened the fingers of his left hand and let the reel of packing drop into the tub. It was the magician's trick—doing something with one hand to attract attention from the other.

For a split second Boyer's eyes flashed downward, and in that tiny interval of time, Dale flamed into action. He dared not try for his gun; to attempt to dive from the top of the insecure stool might be fatal.

But there still was the steel rod, heavy at the base and pliant as a fisherman's caster. It still was high above his head and in position to slash downward.

Crooking his left arm back at the elbow to clear the way, he swung body and rod together in a beautifully synchronized stroke.

The weapon flashed downward across Boyer's forehead, nose and cheek in a slashing cut that laid the flesh bare to the bone.

Boyer's gun crashed once — ineffectually. The force of the blow had upset the stool and Dale already was falling as the firing pin sank home in the butt of the shell.

He came up like a cat, gun out, ready for action.

But there was no need for the weapon. Boyer, blinded, half stunned, was staggering about, moaning with pain.

Dale leaped in, snatched away the gun, pinned his wrists with handcuffs with a series of movements as fast as a blur of light. Then he swung his prisoner about and marched him back to the doorway of the bedroom, where he said grimly:

"Don't try any tricks, Mrs. Boyer, or whatever your name is. Boyer's on his way to the chair and there's no use of you getting into a jam."

"Take him away," a feminine voice answered. "He means nothing in my young life—the big boob, falling for a trick like that."

She flashed on the night light, sat up in bed, a hard-faced blonde with cold-cream liberally smeared across her features.

"You can have him, Mister Shamus, and I hope you've got that other heavy thinker that looks like him. They've had me ducking and dodging for five years and I'm fed up."

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Dale eyed her narrowly. "You won't be bothered with him any more," he told her. "Mathis was the alibi-guy this time, so Boyer killed Highpockets and my partner—didn't he?"

She snorted her disgust, replied: "And all the time he thought the double-alibi plan was foolproof. Yeah, he did both jobs and he's kept me awake half the night bragging about them."

Dale turned on the lights, dialed headquarters, asked for Captain Frazier. Then they heard him say:

"All set, Captain; send out to the address I gave you and I'll give you the man who killed Marty—and Highpockets."

Frazier let out a war-whoop, answered: "You're sure, Dale; no chance of a backfire?"

"Sure as death and taxes, Captain; and you'd better send a doctor along. I cut this baby's face half in two when he tried to gun me out. And by the way, ask Miss Leroy if she's doing anything this evening."

"Yeah, she's got a date, she says—with a young dick named Morgan—you lucky pup," Frazier said.

An Inconsiderate Killer

MISS BACON of Chatham, England, had the bad luck to detect her eighteen-year-old servant, Elizabeth Laws, sneaking up to her room at dawn after a night of dissipation. The shocked old lady expressed her opinion of such conduct in terms so severe that Elizabeth was impelled to rebuke her with a coal hammer. Then cunning prompted her to rush to the door and scream for help. Burglars, she told the milk boy, had murdered Miss Bacon and wounded herself, pointing to a slight cut on her own neck inflicted by herself. To the police, her maneuvers were perfectly transparent, and even her own lawyer at the trial was somewhat diffident about begging for a manslaughter verdict.

But, to everyone's astonishment, the jury brought in a verdict of not guilty. Nobody was more astonished at their gullibility than the murderess herself. Having so expressed herself, she ate a hearty meal, and took a little nap. And then, assured that she could not be tried again, she had so little regard for the feelings of the jury as to confess the murder, freely giving all the details.

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Letter-Perfect

Dolph let him have the blackjack

By Hal Borland

DOLPH BERGER had nine long months in which to figure out the very difficult Henderson job, thanks to Sergeant Mullen. Mr. Mullen was the detestable individual who stumbled onto the fact that Dolph's alibi had a twenty-minute loophole after Dolph held up the filling station. And the loophole coincided with the time of the holdup. Dolph went to the jug, and he had nine months to think up the alibi that would make a monkey out of Mr. Mullen. Dolph figured it out. He got it down letter-perfect. And now he was ready to use it.

SHORT DETECTIVE THRILLER

He Thought His Alibi Was Letter-Perfect—Only the Letter Turned Out to Be a Bill That Demanded Payment in Full—and with No Way Out

He was whistling when he went downstairs, and even when he found a bill from the electric light company in his mail slot there in the foyer he didn't care much. He just stuck the letter in his topcoat pocket, unopened, and went on out. He went down to the corner drug store and bought some cigarettes and played the bagatelle board until six o'clock. Then he went over to John's restaurant. He took an hour for dinner, and he kidded the waitress and gave her a big tip, so she would remember him. Then he went over to Louey's pool hall and stayed there, shooting a few

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games and talking to Louey, until eight o'clock. When he left, he just kind of faded out; the boys wouldn't miss him for maybe twenty minutes.

He stopped at the garage, found the night man back in the shop and told him he'd been waiting, up front, a quarter of an hour. Which he hadn't, of course. But Dolph told him to look at his car. Maybe it needed a new spark plug. It wasn't hitting quite right. Which wasn't true either, but it spotted both Dolph and his car.

From the garage he ran the two blocks to Pine Street, where the youngster with the little sedan parked his car every Thursday night while he went up to spend the evening with some blond girl. Two weeks ago the kid had left his key in the car and Dolph had had a duplicate made. Tonight the car was locked, but Dolph used the duplicate key, waited till a trolley car came along, stepped on the starter while the trolley drowned out the noise, and was gone.

Henderson's place was only four miles out. The old man lived all alone in a house several hundred yards back from the highway, where he kept an antique shop. He sold rickety chairs and battered bedsteads to millionaires, and he got plenty money for them. He didn't trust banks. And he was that goofy, he didn't even keep a watch dog. Just a little pooch, one of those bob-tailed, underslung, long-eared kind of pooch that they called cock-eyed spaniels, or something like that. A pooch that didn't even bark, but snuffled around and was friendly to everybody and snooped in people's pockets for candy like he did in old Henderson's.

The nearest neighbor was a quarter of a mile away. Dolph turned out the lights before he swung into the old man's drive, and he cut off the motor and coasted the last hundred yards, right up to the lilac bushes in front of the house. Just as he stopped, the old man opened the house door and let that cock-eyed pooch out. He stood in the door a minute, kind of sniffing the air and blinking at the darkness; then he shut the door and Dolph heard the pooch snuffling around the bushes.

He opened the door of the car, quietly, and whistled softly, and the pooch came right to him. Hopped up on the running board, and then ran away somewhere and came back again with a candy bag, or something, in its mouth. Dolph hauled it inside the car and it began licking his gloved hands and tried to snoop in his pockets. Dolph backed out of the car, pulled off his topcoat so he would be free for action and tossed it in on the back seat. Then he shut the dog inside and went up on the porch and waited.

In about five minutes the old man came to the door again and called his pooch. When it didn't come, he stepped outside. Dolph, standing there in the shadow, let him have the blackjack, behind the ear.

Part of the money was in the old man's pocket. Dolph found the rest of it in the house, in the old man's desk. Then he went back, ripped the old man's shirt and tore his vest, and barked the harmless knuckles on the stone flagging so it would look like a real fight. And at last he took the old man's watch out of his pocket. It showed 8:26 in the beam of Dolph's tiny flashlight. He set it ahead to half past ten. Then he gave it a wallop with the blackjack. That was the real flourish, the masterpiece of his strategy. By half past ten Dolph would have been in Louey's pool hall an hour and a half, with plenty of witnesses.

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He was kind of thanking the pooch as he went back to the car. It was the pooch, really, that had lured the old man outside and made the job as easy as picking up a nickel. He even grinned when he opened the car door and the pooch, still with a piece of paper in its mouth, hopped out and scooted off somewhere in the darkness. Dolph picked up his topcoat from the floor where the dog had knocked it, put it on, then turned cautious. He felt to see if the pooch had chewed off a button or anything, and then he used his flashlight and searched the car. All he found was a piece of chewed paper, without a scrap of printing or writing on it. But he didn't even trust that. He stuck it in his pocket. Then he went back to town.

He left the car where he got it, and he locked it and dropped the key down a street drain. He dropped that piece of chewed paper down the drain along with it. Then he went back to Louey's pool hall. It was five minutes of nine. Dolph stayed there until a quarter after eleven. Then he went home, thoroughly pleased with himself. There hadn't been a slip anywhere. He'd sure like to see Sergeant Mullen's face when he tied into this one.

HE saw Sergeant Mullen's face less than ten hours later. Mullen was at Dolph's door, with the house manager and another detective, and when Dolph saw Mullen's face it didn't have the right expression. But he didn't take time to figure out why, because Mullen had a gun in his hand and he walked right in and locked the door and told Dolph, still in his pajamas, to sit down in a stiff-backed chair. Dolph knew the game, and he wasn't much worried. Mullen didn't have anything on him this time.

"I don't know what you want," Dolph said, "but you ain't got nothing on me."

"No?" Mullen got sarcastic right off the bat. "Never even heard of Edward T. Henderson, did you?"

Dolph shook his head and wished he had his pants on.

"Didn't know he was murdered and robbed last night, did you?"

Again Dolph shook his head, a little steely-eyed now. He hadn't realized that he hit the old man that hard. Well, he had an alibi. "When was this, Sergeant?" he asked, warily.

"About half past ten, according to the old man's watch. It was smashed in the fight." Mullen had a gloating air as he said it.

Dolph sighed a little and smiled.

"That lets me out," he said, almost eagerly. "I was over at Louey's pool hall. Plenty of the boys will tell you that." He started to get up, casually like, and go get his pants.

"Sit down!" Mullen ordered, stepping closer, and Dolph reluctantly sat down again.

"Weren't out to Henderson's all evening?" Mullen asked, his voice now almost wheedling.

"No."

"Nor all day yesterday?"

"No."

"Over at Louey's from about nine, say, till eleven or a little after?"

"Yeah. Sure. Plenty the boys'll tell you that."

"Went over there when? Around nine?"

"Yeah!" Dolph barked. He was getting angry. He had an alibi, didn't he?

Mullen smiled and relaxed just long enough to let Dolph draw a deep breath of relief. Then Mullen suddenly shot a hard finger out under Dolph's nose and

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cried, "You killed him, and you know damn well you did! You killed him before you went to Louey's!"

Dolph recoiled and started to shake his head. Then he saw that Mullen had a torn and muddied envelope in his hand, was holding it where Dolph could see but not quite reach. And as Dolph looked at it he began to feel dizzy and his eyes blurred.

"Brant Johnson," said Mullen, "lives a quarter of a mile from Henderson's house. At 8:40 last night he heard something out on his porch. He went out and found Henderson's cocker spaniel. The dog had this in its mouth. If you'll look closely, Mr. Berger, you'll see that it's postmarked yesterday afternoon. It is a bill from the electric company, and it's addressed to you. . . . It was pretty clever of you to set the old man's watch ahead before you conked it, but it sure was dumb to give the dog your own personal mail to play with while you did it. . . . Come on."

CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR AUGUST

A total of 6,324 answers were submitted to cryptograms Nos. 181-210, published during August, breaking all previous records for that month in the history of our cipher department, and raising our grand total for the year to 48,664 answers! Your name is in the following list if you sent us one or more solutions to these puzzles! The degree sign (°) distinguishes members of our Inner Circle Club, who have individual records of 1,000 or more solutions with this magazine. Watch for the September Cipher Solvers' Club to be published in an early issue!

Thirty Answers—K. Aaba, Crowland, Ontario, Canada; Aachen, Hollywood, Calif.; Jay Abey, Los Angeles, Calif.; I'mbak Agen, Bay Shore, N. Y.; Amanovlettus, Franklin, N. H.; Anodakadona, Fargo, N. Dak.; Attempt (5th-9th), Akron, Ohio; °Herbert E. Batho, Avalon, Calif.; °See Bee Bee, Hamilton, Kans.; A Has-Been, Union Grove, Wis.; S. B. Booth, New York, N. Y.; Ben Brownie, New York, N. Y.; °Mrs. C. G. Burroughs, Madison, Wis.; °Blue Hen Chick, Middletown, Del.; °Ciphermit, Houlton, Me.; Judson H. Clark, Elmira, N. Y.; °Comrade, Baltimore, Md.; °Joseph E. Conklin, Riverhead, N. Y.; Donald P. Crane, Quincy, Mass.; Jos. M. Crosby, Hayes Center, Nebr.; Cryptanalyst, Clinton, Iowa; °W. E. Dalton, Marion, Ind.; Dogmaamgod, Massillon, Ohio; °Edward J. Drumn, Eagle Rock, Calif.; °M. E., Scranton, Pa.; °Edmaca, Albany, N. Y.; °Arty Ess, Scranton, Pa.; Jay Essee, Fort Benning, Ga.; Ezymarc, Franklin, N. H.; Farad, San Francisco, Calif.; °C. F., Baltimore, Md.; °G. Fulton, Cleveland, Ohio; F. A. Gauntt, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Michael G. H. Gelsinger, Buffalo, N. Y.; The Griffin, Swansea, Mass.; Makem Harder, Berkeley, Calif.; °T. Hegarty, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Helen, Boonton, N. J.; Hitch, Boonton, N. J.; Holly,

(*Continued on Page* 101)

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Concealed by the trees, he strode toward the pool

The Man Who Never Forgot

By Houston Day

He Tried to Run Away from His Perfect Crime—Never Realizing What Quiet, Sinister Danger Lay Waiting for Him

FOR a man who intended to commit murder that night Sidney Klems appeared remarkably cool and self-possessed as he stood in front of the Washburn Building waiting for his expensive limousine to pull up to the curb.

He was corpulent, self-satisfied and pompous. Daily massaging and steaming had erased every line of character from his face, leaving it flabby, white and unwholesome. Being a man of strong will, however, he saw what he wanted to see when he looked into a mirror and thought himself youthful,

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strong and handsome with a very fine figure.

The heavy car came to a stop and Jed White, the chauffeur, jumped from his seat and opened the door. It would have been easier and quicker for Klems to have twisted the silvered handle, but instead he waited. It was characteristic of him. He was paying for service, and he demanded full worth for every penny.

"My cigars, please, White."

The chauffeur hesitated. He was an old man, as chauffeurs go, nearly sixty. "I'm sorry, sir," he said respectfully. "I forgot them. I'll be driving by on the way home, though, sir, and I'll get them for you then."

The smoothness of Klems' bleached, expressionless face was rippled by a frown, and his full lips pouted petulantly. "Stupid," he snapped. "Inexcusable! You were just too lazy to drive the extra blocks."

"But sir. . . ."

"No excuses, please. No man ever forgets anything unless he wants to. That is axiomatic. Apparently you don't care to do as you're told."

"But I did, sir. I intended to get them, but I was jammed in the traffic at Canal Street, and I was afraid I'd be late."

"I told you I wanted no excuses. You should have allowed extra time. Perhaps I'd better get another driver."

Satisfied that he had given the chauffeur something to worry about, Klems sank back into the cushions and relaxed as the car started for the estate of old Libeus Washburn in fashionable Westchester County.

Scurrying pedestrians hastened to clear a path as White jockeyed the car through traffic, attempting to make up for the time he had lost when he had stopped at the shop on Nassau Street for the cigars. A policeman smiled and waved him ahead at Seventy-second Street; he had recognized the features of the car's occupant, and Sidney Klems' eyes glowed with satisfaction. He was somebody now, a person of importance, and he was proud of himself.

He had prospered almost unbelievably since he had first gone to work for Libeus Washburn five years ago. From secretary he had risen to partner, and as old man Washburn's memory began to fail he had taken advantage of his power of attorney to act with a free hand and efficiently and craftily set about transferring the old man's millions to his own account. Now Libeus Washburn was ninety-four and of his once great wealth only the house and the ten acres of magnificently landscaped gardens remained. Sidney Klems closed his eyes. Yes, the time had come for his employer to die.

THE car drew up to the house and the serenity of Klems' metallic eyes was dimmed by a frown as he saw the tables set under the trees on the lawn and the Japanese lanterns swaying over the swimming pool.

"What's going on here?" he demanded.

The gardener, twisting his cap in gnarled fingers, explained: "Miss Judy's giving a party, sir. You haven't forgotten, have you, Mr. Klems? It's her birthday."

Sidney Klems' closely shaven jowls flushed pinkly at this slight to his infallible memory. "I never forget," he snapped. "Remove the lanterns. Drain the pool. There will be no party tonight."

"But Mr. Klems. . . ."

"I'll have no argument. Have you forgotten my orders?"

He saw the girl on the porch, knew

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that she had overheard, so he waved the gardener away. "Do as you're told," he said. "At once."

The girl came down the steps as the gardener started to obey. With her was young Dr. Cartwright who had taken over his father's practice in the nearby village. Judy Washburn's face was puzzled, disappointed. "But Mr. Klems," she said. "Why? I don't understand. . . ."

Klems' petulant lips were set in a rigid line. "Your grandfather's condition is serious," he interrupted. "Right now his life is hanging only by a thread, and under the circumstances I can't permit a noisy celebration. . . ."

"But he always told me he wanted me to enjoy myself. He said it gave him pleasure, too."

"He is too old for pleasure," said Klems. "He might die at any minute. If you doubt my word ask the doctor here."

Young Cartwright looked embarrassed as the girl's eyes searched his. "He's right, Judy," he agreed. "Your grandfather is very frail. Perhaps the noise would upset him."

The girl flushed, and she blinked to restrain the tears. She turned to Klems. "You knew it was my birthday, and you knew I intended to invite my friends for the party. Why didn't you say something before this? You didn't have to wait until the last minute. You've made me feel like a heartless, selfish creature. Must I call it off?"

"Yes," said Klems flatly. "Of course."

He strode past the girl and entered the house. His orders would be carried out, he knew. Members of the household, like the employees of the brokerage office, now obeyed him as they had once obeyed old Libeus Washburn.

The memory of Cartwright's discomfiture twisted his lips in a sneer. "The penniless young fool," he muttered. "They're counting on the old man's money to endow a baby hospital. What rot!"

LETTING himself into the still library after a perfunctory knock, Klems saw the aged man sitting quietly in his easy chair awaiting his evening meal of bread and milk. "How are you, boss," Klems greeted him. "You're looking as alert and spry as a two-year old. Feel like a chukker of polo in the morning?"

The old man grinned gratefully at this pleasantry. "No," he sighed. "All I want now is peace, and it is you I have to thank for the fact that I have that. You've been a real son to me, Sidney."

"Forget it, Mr. Washburn. I've always thought of you as a friend, a good friend, rather than as an employer."

The old man nodded feebly. "Yes, and I have seen to it that you will be rewarded for your regard in my will."

Klems laughed, and his pleasure was unfeigned. Washburn had given just the opportunity he needed to carry out his scheme and he was quick to seize it. "There, there," he cautioned. "Don't tell me you've already forgotten our plans for the will?"

The aged man looked embarrassed. He twisted the cord of his lounging robe nervously. "Why of course not," he exclaimed with a feeble chuckle. "My mind is as good as it ever was."

"Of course it is," Klems reassured him. "So let's get down to business. . . ."

He drew two sheets of legal foolscap from his inside coat pocket and laid them on the table. "As I explained last night, I have willed everything to you. I've also prepared a new testament for

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you with myself named as beneficiary, of course."

Libeus Washburn showed signs of hesitation, his eyes clouded with doubt, but Klems did not give him a chance to put his unspoken questions into words. "You remember our talk about the Hexin-Worthington merger, of course," he said. "We have millions at stake, and until the transaction is completed next month some sort of protection is necessary. In the event something happens to one of us, the other must be free to act as he sees fit. Otherwise we would lose heavily, and this, coupled with the new inheritance tax, might even threaten the solvency of the estate. . . ."

Klems watched the old man narrowly as he talked. Washburn's seamed face was heavy with doubt. His ordinarily bright eyes were puzzled. He didn't know what the deal was about, but Klems knew he would not admit it, even to himself.

He could read the old man's thoughts plainly. More clearly than words Washburn's harried eyes telegraphed his unspoken thoughts, doubts and fears. Was he actually losing his mind? Had he really forgotten a conversation that had taken place only the previous day? Years were creeping up on him, and Klems saw the terror in the old man's eyes as he considered this new sign of an impaired memory with growing apprehension.

Washburn shrugged, dropped his eyes and forced a feeble chuckle. "Of course," he exclaimed. "Of course, my boy. You are quite right. I'm afraid I have been inattentive recently when you talked of business. But why should I have to listen? I've put the cares of business aside. I rely upon you implicitly."

Klems breathed deeply with relief, and at the same time hid a discreet smile with the back of his hand. Never for an instant had he doubted the ultimate success of his scheme, but now that the final step was just ahead he found it difficult to conceal his jubilation. "Good," he exclaimed. "We'll get it over with now." He rang for the butler and ordered him to bring a footman and return to the library.

Libeus Washburn sat erect as the two servants entered, and when he spoke he tried to impart the vigor of long departed years to his voice.

"I want you men to witness that I am in complete possession of my faculties," he said. "I'm signing this instrument without duress, mental or physical."

The servants exchanged surprised glances, but the old man hastened to reassure them. "My partner's affairs and mine are so interwoven that in the event something happens to one of us, the other must have full legal right to dispose of the estate as he sees fit. . . ."

"Yes," Klems put in, "this is just a formality, but a very necessary one."

Washburn scratched his name on the bottom of the document and handed the pen to Hawkins, the butler. Klems smiled to himself as the two servants witnessed both the wills. Their eyes would pop when they learned of the size of the bequests left to them. He had thought of everything; there would be no disgruntled servant to sympathize with or aid Judy Washburn when she found out that she had been cut off with a pittance.

The old man remonstrated feebly as he glanced at Klems' will. "It's hardly necessary for you to leave me all your money, is it, Sidney?" he asked. "I'm confident nothing is going to happen to you for a good many years."

"Nothing will happen to either of

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us, I hope," Klems said pompously, "but there is nothing like being prepared. No man knows when the end might come."

BUT Sidney Klems was still chuckling to himself when he left the old man to his memories—and doubts. Ascending the stairway, he went to his quarters, sank into an easy chair, and lighted a cigar. There was just time for a leisurely smoke and a couple of cocktails before dinner.

Contemplating the fragile smoke rings which his imagination transformed into dollar signs, Klems congratulated himself on his shrewdness. It all seemed almost too good to be true. From a thirty-dollar a week clerk he had risen to the point where he controlled millions. Soon even this magnificent estate would be his. It had to be. It was essential to his happiness.

All his plans had carried without a single stumble. Tomorrow old man Washburn would be found dead, and who was there to dispute his right to inherit what was left of his employer's fortune? Klems had no desire to mingle with the young people who would drift to the house expecting to be entertained so he ordered his dinner served in his quarters. His thoughts were pleasant as he lingered over the truffled pheasant and sipped his wine. The savoury flavor of the cheese made him glow with satisfaction, and the brandy and coffee that followed made him feel kindly toward the whole world, but himself in particular.

Afterwards, his physical senses appeased, he leaned back, puffed his cigar, and meditated upon the life of luxury he would enjoy during the years to come. Only one minor detail remained to complete his scheme. Old man Washburn must be put to death, but this detail, he reasoned, would be the easiest of the series of events he had so painstakingly mapped. A pillow held over his employer's face for a moment would do the trick. The old man would expire like the flame of a candle in the wind. Fright alone might kill him. Libeus Washburn's heart was beating slower and more laboriously with each passing hour.

There would be no suspicion of foul play. There could be none. When men reached the age of ninety-four it was time for them to die. Medical history could supply numerous instances of aged, frail persons suffocating in their beds, and who would be surprised at the news that Libeus Washburn had finally passed away in his sleep.

True, some suspicious, evil-minded person might think the signing of his new will on the eve of death somewhat unusual. Klems had an answer ready for them. "Ridiculous! Absurd! Don't you think I'd have sense enough to wait a reasonable time if I were a murderer?" The police would appreciate the logic of such a defense. Even Judy Washburn would have to testify to his extreme solicitude. Hadn't he called off her party rather than risk disturbing her grandfather?

Finally, with a last self-satisfied chuckle, Klems undressed for bed and extinguished the lights. Sleep was not long in coming. His thoughts were too pleasant to let him lie awake. From waking dreams of joys to come to the slumberous imaginings of desire is but a brief step.

He did not even pause to retrace his steps to make sure he had overlooked nothing. It wasn't necessary. He never forgot. Every contingency had been thought out and provided for. The books at the office would stand expert scrutiny. Expensive lawyers had drawn

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up both wills. Even the Hexin-Worthington merger was an actuality, although it involved not the slightest risk. No, he had overlooked nothing. Sidney Klems had reason to be proud of his never-failing memory.

IT was just before dawn when the small alarm clock on his night table sounded a single, musical note. Instantly Sidney Klems was awake. He glanced at the luminous dial, saw that it was only a few minutes till four, then raised himself on his elbow and listened. The house was as still as death.

Rising quietly, he stepped into his slippers and donned a robe, left his room, and started down the stairs. Old man Washburn slept on a screened porch. His entire life was confined to the one floor to save his strength.

Keeping to the side of the stairway, Klems avoided every squeak. The ninth and fourth steps he negotiated with extreme caution. Countless times he had rehearsed this foray and he knew every whispering board in his path.

Moving silently, cautiously, Klems had his hand on the knob of Washburn's door when he heard a noise in the kitchen. Backing away swiftly, he cursed under his breath.

For a moment he listened. Voices, young voices, and laughter came to him through a door in the rear of the house. Judy had celebrated her birthday at the Red Mill, the servant who had served his dinner told him. Now she'd returned with some of her closer friends for scrambled eggs and coffee.

Klems recognized the voice of young Dr. Cartwright. He heard the musical chuckle of the Hallsworth girl who lived on the adjoining estate. There were others present, too, some of the voices familiar, some strange.

"The little brat," Klems muttered. For a moment he stood there, motionless and undecided. Should he risk entering Washburn's room anyway? He answered this question hastily. No . . . It would be foolish, insane, to take a single chance. Suppose the kitchen door should open while he was emerging from the room? His nocturnal visit would be difficult to explain when it was learned Washburn had died during the night.

As he stood there he heard the rattle of a hand on the knob of the kitchen door. With speed surprising for a man of his weight, he swiftly sprang to the hall door and slipped out on the porch. Pausing there, he listened, his heart beating fast.

Had anyone heard him? His soft felt slippers had made no sound. The door behind him had closed silently. His breath began to come more evenly as he heard the laughing voices from the kitchen. Still unaware of his nearness, Judy's guests were leaving.

Crossing the porch cautiously, Klems started over the lawn, clinging closely to the darkness of the stately elms in front of the mansion. A cloud obscured the moon, and as yet there were no signs of dawn. The blackness suited him perfectly.

Once in the concealment of the trees he was bolder, and safe in the knowledge he could not be seen from the house he strode toward the pool. There was no cause for worry now; his mind was at ease. Even if he should be seen no one would suspect anything, for it had long been his custom to rise early in the summer and awaken himself with a plunge before his morning gallop.

It was one of the luxuries he had grown accustomed to, and one of the principal reasons he had decided that the Washburn estate must become his. He

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could not bear the thought of going back to hotel or apartment life after enjoying the pleasures of the Washburn home, and nowhere else in Westchester could he find a place nearly so well suited to his needs and tastes.

"This is an accident," he told himself. "An accident that I could not foresee. Soon they will be gone. Then I can return, and on my way to my room I'll visit old man Libeus. . . ."

He slipped out of his dressing gown. It was a calm, beautiful night, warm without being humid, yet cool enough to be comfortable. A waking bird chirped in a nearby tree, and a faint breeze brought the fragrance of roses from the garden. Klems smiled with pleased anticipation. Soon all this would be his to hold and enjoy as long as he lived. And why shouldn't he have the opportunity to enjoy his wealth in such a perfect setting? What good was this great estate to old man Washburn who never left his library and sleeping porch? What good would it do his granddaughter without the money to keep it up? She wanted to turn the stately mansion into a baby hospital with the money she expected to inherit. Bah! Money should be spent for the pleasure it would bring. Sidney Klems' eyes brightened . . . Travel . . . Beautiful women . . . Fine living. The future was as dazzling to him as the brightness of the noon-day sun.

Four short steps brought him to the end of the springboard, and with a jump that called for the slightest stiffening of the knees he launched himself expertly in the air.

Body rigid, he threw his head back and spread his arms in a swan dive. There was no one to see him, he regretted, no one to applaud his perfection, but he enjoyed the exhilaration of his own self-congratulation as he soared through the air.

His body began to lose height, and with back still arched he brought his hands together, taking care at the same time to point his toes as he braced himself for the impact with the water. He enjoyed the feeling of floating on air like a hawk in the sky, then swooping downward as if to grasp his prey, but as his legs continued their arc he knew that he'd begun his downward plunge too soon and that the perfection of his dive had been spoiled.

Anything short of perfection always annoyed Sidney Klems, so he was already frowning in that single, flashing, painful instant when his head smashed into the concrete and he remembered too late that he'd ordered the gardener to drain the pool.

CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR AUGUST

(*Continued from Page 94*)

Dallas, Pa.; °G. M. Howe, Allston, Mass.; A. W. H., Palmetto, Fla.; Mrs. Opal Hurt, Albert Lea, Minn.; Alter Idem, Welland, Ontario, Canada; °U. U. Jeff, Massillon, Ohio; Jonesibus, Austin, Tex.; Kate, Crowley, La.; °Kismet, Corona, N. Y.; Doc K, Cicero, Ill.; Edward L. Kowalski, Chicago, Ill.; Marie Kristjansson, Brooklyn, N. Y.; J. C. K., Gary, Ind.; Lethargic, Los Angeles, Calif.; °E. H. Loyd, Jr., Chicago, Ill.; Mrs. Bertha Luckmun, Ocheyedan, Iowa; Lynn, New York, N. Y.; °Nice, A. M., Indianapolis, Ind.; °Magi, Chicago, Ill.; Bernard McGee, Bloomfield, N. J.; Del J. McLane, East Liverpool, Ohio; Minerva, Marion, Ind.; Mogliatina, Bayonne, N. J.; Hard Boiled One, San Francisco, Calif.; °M. O., Bronx N. Y.; Owleyes, Brandon, Vt.; °Mrs Anna M. Page, Shelburne Falls, Mass.; Phoney, San Pedro, Calif.; Piscator, Middletown, N. Y.; Nickle-Plate, Saranac Lake, N. Y.; W. F. Plette, Galesburg, Ill.; Porthos, Fall River, Mass.; °Primrose, Baltimore, Md.; Qpkwins, Roxbury, Mass.; Isabel Revord, Hartford, Conn.; Don Ricardo, Gretna, La.; Charles L. Rohde, Baltimore, Md.; Frank Roman, Kansas City, Mo.; Mrs. H. A. Seals, Cleveland, Ohio; Kay Vee See, Seattle, Wash.; °O. I. See, Caroleen, N. C.; °Sleepy, Bryn Mawr, Pa.; °A. W. Smith, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Mrs. Josephine Spalding, Arizona; Sam Spiegel, Butte, Mont.; A. Onyx

(*Continued on Page 117*)

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CRIME LABORATORY
By LOCAN-REAVIS
AN UNKNOWN MAN, HAVING FATALLY INJURED A WOMAN, WITH A HATCHET, ESCAPED WITHOUT LEAVING A TRACE.
PREPARING FOR AN OPERATION TO SAVE HER LIFE, IF POSSIBLE, ALL HAIR WAS SHAVED FROM HER HEAD. THE HAIR WAS THEN THROWN AWAY.
ONLY THROUGH THE USE OF TWEEZERS CAN HAIR SUCCESSFULLY BE OBTAINED FOR COMPARISON PURPOSES. CUTTING WILL ONLY GIVE PART OF THE HAIR FOR EXAMINATION.
A HATCHET, WITH ADHERING HAIRS, WAS FOUND. IF THIS HAIR COULD BE IDENTIFIED AS THE WOMAN'S IT WAS BELIEVED THAT HER ASSAILANT COULD BE TRACED.
FOLLOWING THE OPERATION THE WOMAN DIED. AFTER THE FINDING OF THE HATCHET THE WOMAN'S ROOM WAS SEARCHED TO FIND HAIR FOR COMPARISON WITH THAT FOUND ON THE HATCHET. BUT HER ROOMMATE HAD SIMILARLY COLORED HAIR, USED THE SAME COMB AND BRUSH AND THE CASE WAS FINALLY DECLARED UNSOLVED.
BOX HELPS TO NEATLY FOLD THE ENDS
CLEAN PAPER
HAIRS
FIRST FOLD TO HERE
THEN FOLD OVER TO HERE
FOLD OVER AGAIN
AS A DRUGGIST ENFOLDS POWDER
TIP
SHAFT
ROOT
PARTS OF A HAIR
FOREARM
THIGH
BACK OF HAND
MOUSTACHE
VARIATIONS IN SIZES OF HAIRS FROM DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE BODY, AS SEEN BY THE MICROSCOPE.
THE DRUGGIST'S METHOD OF FOLDING PAPER WILL INSURE SAFE TRANSPORT OF HAIR TO THE LABORATORY. WITH THE HAIR MUST BE SENT A DETAILED REPORT SHOWING EXACTLY HOW, WHERE, WHEN, BY WHOM AND UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES THE HAIR WAS FOUND.

Since 1850, the importance of hair in criminal cases has been more and more recognized. Under the cold lens of the microscope, a hair may become the sole identifying clue of the crime. Many previously "unsolved" crimes could have been broken with modern laboratory methods

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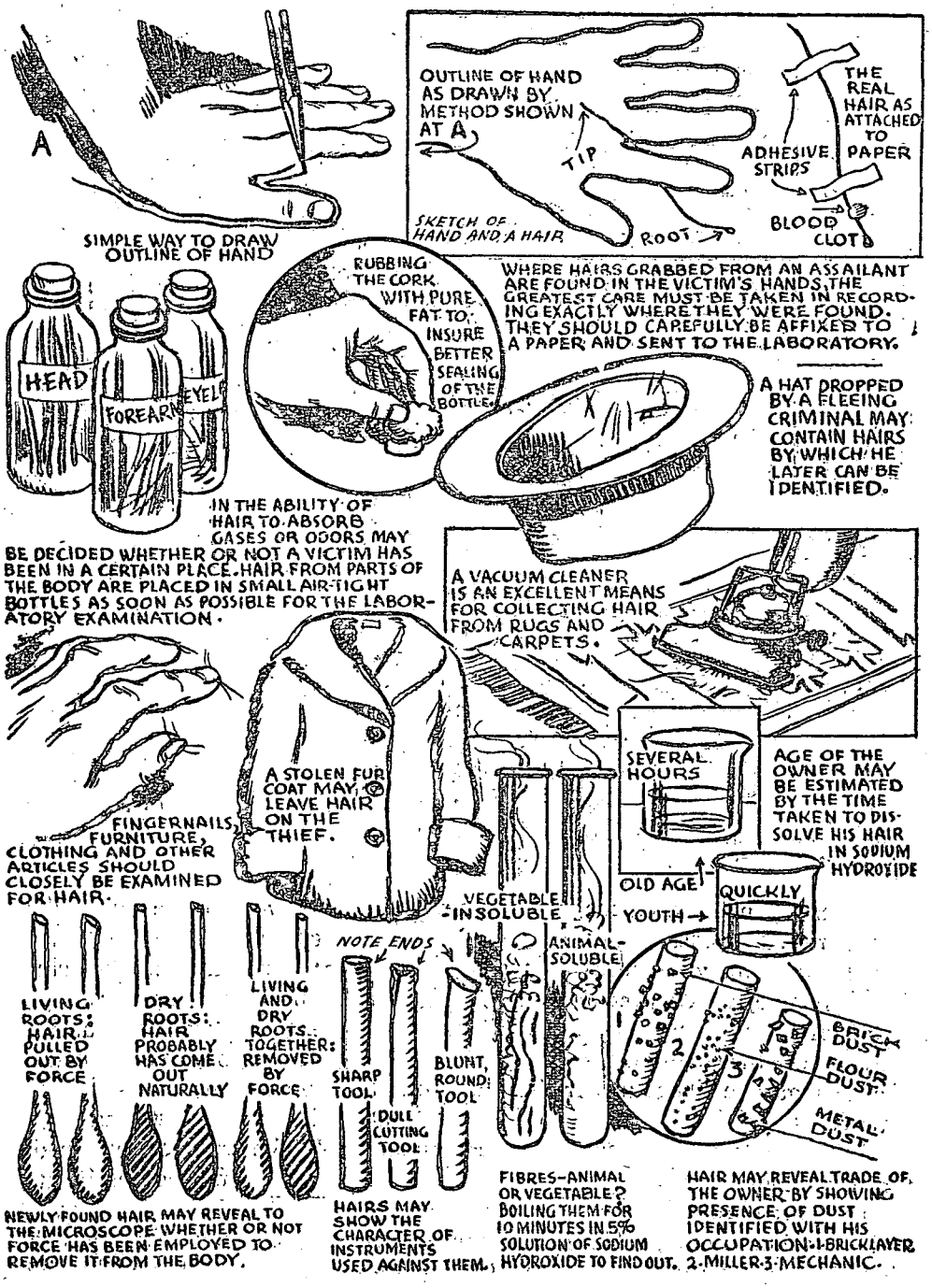
A
SIMPLE WAY TO DRAW OUTLINE OF HAND
OUTLINE OF HAND AS DRAWN BY METHOD SHOWN AT A
TIP
SKETCH OF HAND AND A HAIR
ROOT
THE REAL HAIR AS ATTACHED TO PAPER
ADHESIVE STRIPS
BLOOD CLOT
HEAD
FOREARM
EYE
RUBBING THE CORK WITH PURE FAT TO INSURE BETTER SEALING OF THE BOTTLE.
WHERE HAIRS GRABBED FROM AN ASSAILANT ARE FOUND IN THE VICTIM'S HANDS, THE GREATEST CARE MUST BE TAKEN IN RECORDING EXACTLY WHERE THEY WERE FOUND. THEY SHOULD CAREFULLY BE AFFIXED TO A PAPER AND SENT TO THE LABORATORY.
A HAT DROPPED BY A FLEEING CRIMINAL MAY CONTAIN HAIRS BY WHICH HE LATER CAN BE IDENTIFIED.
IN THE ABILITY OF HAIR TO ABSORB GASES OR ODORS MAY BE DECIDED WHETHER OR NOT A VICTIM HAS BEEN IN A CERTAIN PLACE. HAIR FROM PARTS OF THE BODY ARE PLACED IN SMALL AIR-TIGHT BOTTLES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR THE LABORATORY EXAMINATION.
A VACUUM CLEANER IS AN EXCELLENT MEANS FOR COLLECTING HAIR FROM RUGS AND CARPETS.
FINGERNAILS, FURNITURE, CLOTHING AND OTHER ARTICLES SHOULD CLOSELY BE EXAMINED FOR HAIR.
A STOLEN FUR COAT MAY LEAVE HAIR ON THE THIEF.
SEVERAL HOURS
AGE OF THE OWNER MAY BE ESTIMATED BY THE TIME TAKEN TO DISSOLVE HIS HAIR IN SODIUM HYDROXIDE
OLD AGE
YOUTH
QUICKLY
VEGETABLE-INSOLUBLE
ANIMAL-SOLUBLE
NOTE ENDS
LIVING ROOTS: HAIR PULLED OUT BY FORCE
DRY ROOTS: HAIR PROBABLY HAS COME OUT NATURALLY
LIVING AND DRY ROOTS TOGETHER: REMOVED BY FORCE
SHARP TOOL
DULL CUTTING TOOL
BLUNT, ROUND TOOL
BRICK DUST
FLOUR DUST
METAL DUST
NEWLY FOUND HAIR MAY REVEAL TO THE MICROSCOPE WHETHER OR NOT FORCE HAS BEEN EMPLOYED TO REMOVE IT FROM THE BODY.
HAIRS MAY SHOW THE CHARACTER OF INSTRUMENTS USED AGAINST THEM.
FIBRES—ANIMAL OR VEGETABLE? BOILING THEM FOR 10 MINUTES IN 5% SOLUTION OF SODIUM HYDROXIDE TO FIND OUT.
HAIR MAY REVEAL TRADE OF THE OWNER BY SHOWING PRESENCE OF DUST IDENTIFIED WITH HIS OCCUPATION: 1-BRICKLAYER 2-MILLER 3-MECHANIC.

regarding hair. The scene of every crime should be searched diligently for such clues. The next CRIME LABORATORY feature, dealing with sketching the scenes of crimes, will appear soon, in the pages of this magazine.

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A Touch of Silver

She lounged easily there at the door

By
Earl W. Scott

CRIME DOES NOT SHORT

THE big man nosed the battered roadster into the dark alley off Rosewood Avenue, rolled past a high board fence, and slid to a stop before the closed doors of a brick garage. The number over the lintel read—3426.

Killing lights and motor, he kicked the car door wide with a scuffed brogue and creaked out, hitching at worn, stained britches with strong hairy hands. His scowling glance settled on the opening between fence and building corner and he hurried through this, only to bring up abruptly at sight of a glowing window. It was in the kitchen of the brick mansion, some twenty yards away.

"Damn!" he muttered. "I thought—" The sentence remained unfinished as he strode cautiously forward over the grass siding of the walk. Three steps led up to a screened porch. From the second of these he could peer

Circumstances Must Have Been Dark and Strange to Force This Burglar to Leave His Loot Behind—Cheerfully

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through the uncurtained window.

Sensing no movement inside, he tried the screen door handle. Locked, of course. Patting his pockets swiftly, he produced a Barlow knife and, slitting the screen, inserted a hand to lift the hook. Determinedly crossing the porch, he pushed through the unlocked door into the kitchen, glistening with porcelain and chromium.

Strong fingers reached for the light switch and the room was plunged into soft gloom. That same instant a droning mutter filled the air. Fishing out a flash, he spotted the large white door of the electric refrigerator. Muttering deep in his throat, he strode across, jerking it wide, eying the contents.

"Why not?" he breathed and retrieved a fat portion of chicken breast from the luscious browned fowl on a tray. He kneed the door shut, sighing, as he sunk strong teeth into the meat.

Glowing flash still clutched under an armpit, he swung around and made through the open doorway into a hall. To his left a door stood unlatched. He pushed through, tossing a cursory glance about and rounding the dining table, paused before a shiny sideboard.

Everywhere was complete stillness broken only by the swish of a stiff breeze in the maples outside. Sucking the grease from his fingers with relish, he opened a drawer, stood regarding the glittering display of silverware a moment, then plunged in a hand.

Without warning the room sprung to brilliance. His wide shoulders stiffened as he crouched there above the open drawer. Then slowly he turned.

A WOMAN stood in the hall door, a small automatic in her outstretched hand. She had red wavy hair and heavily carmined lips. Her nails, too, glowed with color. She wore a tight-fitting black silk dress. It was properly molded to disclose bold charms beneath. She lounged easily there at the sill, dark eyes, heavy with mascara, narrowed.

"Well?" the full lips questioned.

The big man swallowed noisily. "Er—ah—who the devil are you?" he managed.

She laughed throatily. "Not that it makes any difference, but I happen to be the housekeeper here. Looking for something?" The gun lifted menacingly.

He spread thick hands. The right clutched three silver knives. He grinned crookedly. "Oh, I get you," he said. "The—er—silverware?"

"The silverware," she confirmed, nodding slowly.

Fleeting emotions chased across his heavy features which gradually settled into a hang-dog look. "I guess you got me, lady," he offered, wetting his lips, then hopeful speculation seemed to ride his glance. "You wouldn't believe me, I suppose, if I told you this was my first job."

She relaxed slightly, smiling cryptically, smoothing at a swelling hip line with her left hand. "I might," she said, "considering the noise of your entrance."

"Aw, jeez, lady, have a heart!" he stepped forward impulsively. "I got a wife and—and—a new kid at home—can't even go on relief 'count of her gettin' a few bucks a month from her old man—but it ain't enough, see? We gotta have medicine—" He paused.

The gun's nose lowered slightly. She said, "Poor little duffer. A boy?"

"A boy," he nodded eagerly.

She shook her ruddy head doubtfully. "I don't know—maybe you're just—"

"Lying? No, lady, I swear it. Jeez, if I went to jail—I—I—don't know what'd happen."

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She shifted uncertainly. "A baby, eh?" she asked again. "A—boy." She was evidently turning the matter over in her mind, then her chin came up. "You shan't go to jail. After all, what are a few knives. Put that silver back and get out." She waved the gun commandingly.

"Oh, lady, that's swell." Swiftly he dropped the knives clattering into the drawer.

She watched him thoughtfully. "You'll promise never to do this again?"

"Lady, I pass my word. Say, it's swell you givin' me another chance." He approached uncertainly and she stepped aside. He pushed clumsily past her and hurried down the hall into the kitchen. The woman followed, high heels clicking on the tiled floor.

"Maybe the Judge could help you when he gets back," she called softly. "Tell him your story. He's on a week-end fishing trip now. He'll be at the Court House Monday."

"Yeah, that's swell, that's just swell." The big man hurried off down the walk, evidently anxious to put distance behind him.

A TIGHT little smile twitched at the woman's lips as she watched him out of sight. Then, turning, she went back through the house. Opening a door on the right of the main hall she entered a spacious den. Hunting trophies lined the walls and a stuffed muskie, beautiful example of the taxidermist's art, poised in the act of striking, above the yawning fireplace.

At the library table under a glowing lamp a slender, flashily dressed young man hunched over a chess board. He grunted, grinding a cigarette butt ruthlessly under his heel into the thick rug.

"Could I give the Judge a few tips on this game!" he offered, turning at her entrance. "Well, who was it? Meter man? I heard his crate in the alley."

The woman laughed, ignoring the question. "Workin' yourself to death, ain't you? Just a moneyed gent of leisure!" She indicated the chess board.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Soft pedal stuff while you paged the slavey."

"Slavey!" she scoffed. "You're nuts! It was a two-bit punk after the silverware. I was the housekeeper and shed a tear over his tough luck story. Shooed him off with a promise to stay sweet and look up the judge, Monday."

"Was that a touch," laughed the other, eyeing the woman's bold lines admiringly. "The poor sap'll hit the judge when he's frothing hottest over our take." He waved a hand.

"Little Mama had a thought," she smirked. "Start sacking up the stuff."

A block distant the big man was scowling over a connection in the 'phone booth at the Swanee Club. "Hello! Police station?" he queried. "Listen, rush a squad out to 3426 Rosewood on the double. Trouble? Hell, yes! Red hots fanning the place. My guess is they've got everything but the door knobs sacked right now. Who's speaking?" His voice rose to a roar. "My God, sergeant, don't you know this voice? I was five miles outron the Goose Lake road, discovered I'd forgotten some trick minnows left in the side board—came back—found I'd locked myself out and left the kitchen light on. I broke in and got braced by a swanky moll posing as the housekeeper—talking about? Say, do you want that job of yours or not?" He shook his head.

"Get this! If there's nothing else to do, have the boys stop by the place on their way home for a turn at chess. This is Judge Bickley speaking!"

He hung up the receiver softly.

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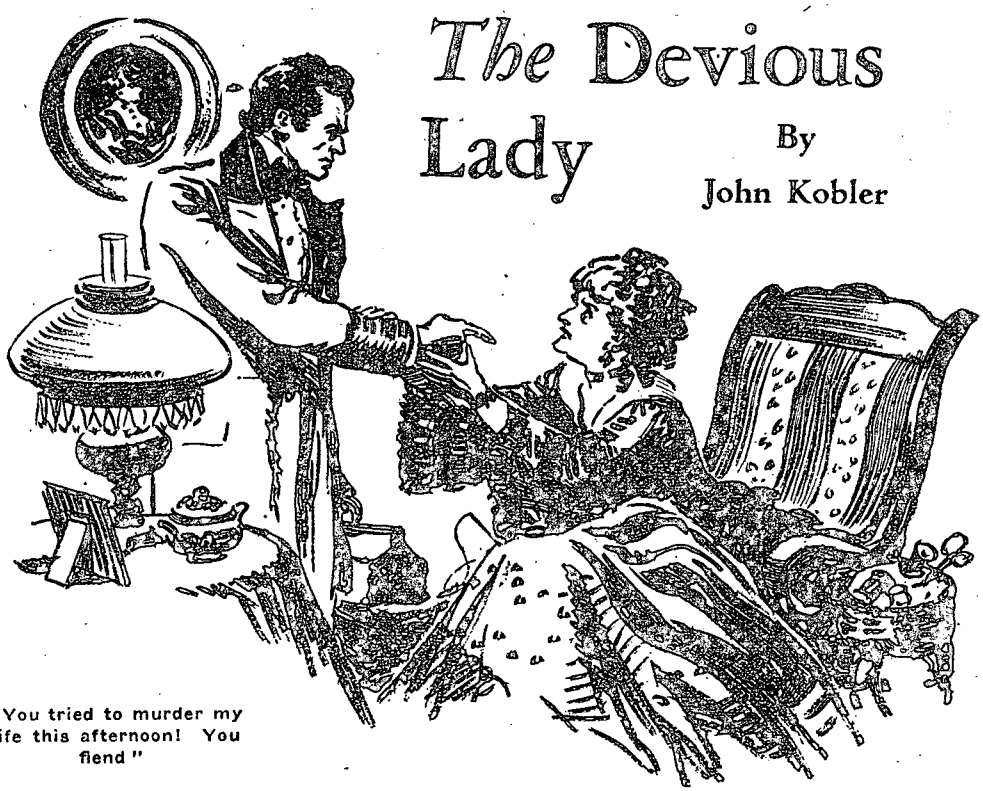
The Devious Lady

By John Kobler



"You tried to murder my wife this afternoon! You fiend"

The Fantastic Case of a Society Woman Who, Trying to Escape the Stigma of a Poisoner, Fed Arsenic Bon-bons to an Entire English Town

IN her forty-third year Miss Christiana Edmunds, of Brighton, England, fell victim to an appalling tragedy. She fell in love. It was the worst thing that could have happened to her. Although she was a lady of considerable and diverse talents—adept with needle and tapestry, a painter of miniatures and a dabbler in *belles lettres* and the sciences and a wealthy lady, too, and of some social standing, she was equipped neither by appearance nor condition to wage a successful campaign of love. She was plain, stringy, desiccated, a typical old spinster of the comic valentine variety.

Worse, if Miss Edmunds was the last lady in Brighton who might expect to enjoy the fruits of a happy love-affair, the man upon whom she had settled her maidenly affections was the last who might be expected to return them. Not only was he young, vigorous and popular, but he was married to a charming lady and utterly devoted to her.

As though these circumstances were not enough to discourage the most ardent lady, the seaside borough of Brighton in the 1870's was a stern, decorous community,

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ever prepared to frown upon extra-marital romances and ostracize those who engaged in them. But Miss Edmunds was not to be discouraged. She was in love with handsome Dr. Beard, as hopelessly, as feverishly in love as an eighteen-year-old girl with her first "crush."

If Miss Edmunds had not suffered from a trifling nervous disorder and if Dr. Beard had not been the best-reputed local physician the whole affair and its tragic repercussions might never have occurred, for socially the Beards and the Edmunds belonged to different circles and it is unlikely they would have met. But meet they did, not once but many times when Dr. Beard trudged up the long brick walk to the spacious Georgian house where Miss Edmunds lived with her mother.

At first Miss Edmunds maintained the ordinary relationship of a patient toward her physician. True, she expressed interest in the doctor's career, displayed towards him a number of little attentions and kindnesses; but nothing more. It was in the autumn of 1870 that her feeling for Dr. Beard became something less than platonic. As he took her hand to feel her pulse, she thrilled to him. She had never known love before and now it swept over her with torrential power. She began sending for him on the slimmest pretext, long after her ailment was cured. She would linger for hours each day along the ocean front, hoping to meet him. At last her infatuation became too obvious to be ignored, even by the gentlemanly doctor.

It was a lush, mellow morning in late October when Dr. Beard faced his flushed, quivering patient in the drawing-room of her home. He had decided upon bold measures.

"Look here," he told her, averting his eyes, "I'm very fond of you, Miss Edmunds. I take great pleasure in your friendship, but—"

She glanced at him from under fluttering eye-lids. "Oh, do you, Dr. Beard? That's—that's wonderful of you."

"But," he resumed, horribly uncomfortable, "this sort of thing must stop."

"Why, Dr. Beard, what sort of thing?"

"My dear Miss Edmunds, I'm only saying this for your own good. Believe me, it's a most unpleasant duty. I—oh, well, there's no use beating about the bush. It's just this—this infatuation, this flirtation. It's no good, I tell you. I'm a married man. I love my wife—" He stopped, blushing furiously, cursing himself inwardly for ever allowing himself to get into such a situation. But the situation was there and he would be eternally damned if he was going to tolerate it for another day. It was too absurd, a man of his position, being virtually pursued by this faded, old spinster, almost old enough to be his mother.

Having made his disclosure, he prepared himself for the worst. The worst happened. Miss Edmunds flew into a violent fit of hysterics. She screamed, laughed, wept, clawed the air, her eyeballs popping from her head as though she were choking. And then she collapsed on the soft bear-rug in a dead faint. Dr. Beard was horrified. Beads of sweat stood out on his brow and his hands trembled. A scandal would ruin his practice. He bent over the heaving body of his patient and applied smelling salts, vowing that when he had revived her he would never again come within a mile of her.

When Miss Edmunds came to, she seemed quite calm. She said softly:

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"I'm sorry, Dr. Beard. I see I've embarrassed you frightfully. It is true I love you, but you may be sure I will never refer to it again."

The young doctor fairly shouted with relief. "There, my dear Miss Edmunds, that's splendid of you. In a few days you will have forgotten all about this lamentable business. It will be as though it had never happened. No one need ever know."

"Of course not."

"And now, Miss Edmunds, one word of advice. I do think it would be better if you called in another doctor to attend you."

For a moment he thought she would become hysterical again. But, no, she had a grip on herself. She looked up and nodded passively. "Whatever you say, Dr. Beard."

"Splendid, splendid! It will all be for the best. You'll see."

And so saying he took up his hat and cloak and strode towards the door. As he left the house, he was aware that Miss Edmunds was staring at him. She was staring at him with wide, searching eyes and Dr. Beard, for reasons he could not fathom, felt the small hairs at the nape of his neck prickle.

FOR two months Christiana Edmunds brooded in the cool silence of her home and Dr. Beard heard of her brooding. He heard of it in a roundabout way and he was worried. He understood Miss Edmunds' type, the neurotic, love-starved spinster. He understood her and, as a man of conscience, was genuinely worried.

He felt that her plight was in a way his fault. He should have sensed the signs of infatuation in her sooner and withdrawn before they had become so violent. As it was, he feared that she might become mentally affected. From all reports she was behaving like a melancholic—listless, disinterested in life and living. Dr. Beard was extremely worried.

His relief was great, then, when in December of 1870, he ran into his former patient in the street and she greeted him calmly.

"Why, Miss Edmunds," he exclaimed, "you are looking splendid!"

"Had you any reason to believe I was otherwise?" she asked.

The doctor reddened. "Not at all, no, indeed. Only—"

"Dr. Beard, I want you to know that I'm completely recovered from my foolishness. You'll hear no more about it from me and I want to thank you for helping me."

"My dear Miss Edmunds, I am delighted!" In his enthusiasm and relief, he thought to show this lonely woman some special courtesy. "Miss Edmunds, you must have tea with Mrs. Beard and myself. Yes, I shall have her ask you to tea. Will you come?"

"Why, Dr. Beard, I'm honored. Indeed, I will."

"Splendid. Then we shall look forward to seeing you."

And Dr. Beard raised his hat, marched off, no doubt congratulating himself on his knowledge of feminine psychology.

A few days later Miss Edmunds presented herself in the drawing-room of the Beard home and for the first time met Mrs. Beard. The doctor was out on a call and the two ladies proceeded to get acquainted. If Mrs. Beard knew anything of her guest's feelings for her husband she didn't betray that knowledge. She was gracious and charming.

"Permit me, Mrs. Beard," Miss Edmunds said before she seated herself at the tea-table, "I have brought you a little gift."

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"My dear, how very thoughtful of you!"

"Are you fond of chocolates?"

"I simply dote on them."

Miss Edmunds handed her a small, glazed box, festooned with blue and pink ribbons. "The cream drops are my favorites. Do try one." She lifted the cover and removed one. She gave it to Mrs. Beard.

"Thank you. My, these do look good."

The doctor's wife lifted the cream drop to her mouth and bit through the thin coating of chocolate. At once she choked and spat it out. "Oh—oh," she gasped, "forgive, Miss Edmunds, but I've never tasted anything like this. It's —it's quite horrible."

Miss Edmunds said nothing, but Mrs. Beard noted that she was ashen and her hands were shaking.

Tea proceeded in an atmosphere of tension and when it was over Miss Edmunds, offering a slim excuse, went home.

When Dr. Beard came in that night, his wife met him at the door in a state of extreme agitation. "Dearest," she cried, "your friend, Miss Edmunds, has just tried to poison me!"

"Good heavens, what are you saying?"

"Tried to poison me, I tell you! I'm not a doctor's wife for nothing. I'll wager my soul there was strychnine in that chocolate drop she gave me!"

"I hope you're sure of what you're saying."

"Come here. Look at this, if you don't believe me." She propelled her husband into the drawing-room and pointed to the candy which she had spat out into a saucer. "The taste was unmistakable. There's strychnine in that candy."

"One moment, my dear. We shall find out for certain." Grim and white, he carried the saucer into the laboratory he had fitted in the rear of the house. There he closeted himself for several hours. When he emerged he said to his wife in flat, dead tones: "You are right. There is enough strychnine in that candy to kill several wives. Thank God you're all right!"

THAT night Dr. Beard entered Miss Edmunds' home, dispensing with the usual courtesy of knocking. He found her in the drawing-room, sewing and came directly to the point. "You tried to murder my wife this afternoon! You—you fiend."

Miss Edmunds let her sewing slip from her brittle fingers. She rose and faced the doctor. "Dear God, Dr. Beard, are you drunk or mad?"

"Neither, as you know very well. You brought my wife some chocolates this afternoon. They were poisoned."

"Ah, I knew it! Dr. Beard, I've suspected it for months. There's a confectioner in Brighton who has been selling tainted candies. I know it, Dr. Beard. This is not the first time. I've heard from others how they bought candies in his shop and then became ill afterwards. Oh, Dr. Beard, you don't believe that I am capable of such a foul deed. I, poison your wife! No, it's that candy shop, and I shall see that the police do something about it. You do believe me, don't you, Dr. Beard?"

He shot her a look of unutterable loathing. "I'm anxious to avoid a scandal and for that reason I will not turn you over to the police. But if you ever approach my wife again or try in any way to speak to me, I will see that you go where you belong—to prison."

Miss Edmunds dropped to her knees and gripped the doctor's coat. "Dr. Beard, Dr. Beard, in pity's name, listen

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to me. I swear to you I had nothing to do with poisoning those chocolates. I never dreamed they were—"

For the first time in his life, Dr. Beard did an ungentlemanly thing. He shoved Miss Edmunds roughly from him and she fell against a chair. "You murderess!" he hurled at her. She was sobbing so loudly that she didn't hear the front door slam.

II

MR. MAYNARD, the stout, bewhiskered manager of Brighton's leading sweetshop, was in murderous mood. He was bellowing to his assistant: "If I ever lay me hands on whoever's spreading tales about my shop, I'll choke the life out of 'em, like that." He clenched his huge, ham-like hands. "Why, you know what's being said about my shop? That I'm selling tainted candies! Me, what's done an honest business these fifteen years!"

The assistant nodded sadly. He had heard the ugly rumors, too. No one seemed to know who had started them or on what grounds, but Mr. Maynard's business was in imminent danger of being ruined.

"Only yesterday," the confectioner continued, "this lady comes in and near bites my head off. Says she bought some of my chocolates and took ill and she flings the box in me face."

"What lady?"

"How do I know what lady? I've seen her around town often enough, but I don't know her name. And the day before that—three kids come in with chocolates they bought. They want me to take 'em back, not the right kind, they said. Humph!" Mr. Maynard shook with silent rage. He was so angry he failed to notice the elderly gentleman enter his shop. He held a little boy by the hand.

Presently Mr. Maynard looked up. "Why, it's Mr. Miller! And little Sydney. How are you son?"

"I'm fine, thank you, Mr. Maynard," the boy replied and gave a little bow. This was Sydney Barker, aged four, and the elderly gentleman was his uncle, Charles Miller.

"I promised Sydney here," the latter said, "that I'd buy him some chocolates. Have you any cream drops?"

"Indeed, I have, sir. The best in town."

Mr. Miller ordered a shilling's worth and the confectioner scooped some up from a bin of loose assorted chocolates. He handed the bag to Mr. Miller, who popped one into his mouth and offered one to his nephew. The boy wolfed it down greedily and asked for another. Mr. Maynard watched them happily as they marched down the street, laughing and munching chocolates.

"There's a gentleman who don't credit no silly rumors, he knows a good confectioner when he sees one," announced Mr. Maynard with pride.

Twenty minutes later Charles Miller and his nephew, Sydney, collapsed in violent convulsions in the streets of Brighton.

Mr. Miller managed to get his little nephew home. The boy was senseless, his limbs rigid. Mr. Miller himself felt dizzy and nauseated. There was a coppery taste in his mouth, but he recovered. He loosed his nephew's collar, laid him on a bed and sent for his family physician, Dr. Richard Rugg. Before he arrived the boy was dead.

Dr. Rugg stared grimly at the tiny body and shook his head, puzzled. "Mr. Miller," he asked, "had you and the boy been eating anything recently?"

Mr. Miller, befuddled with grief and horror, thought a moment. Then he re-

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membered. "Yes, yes, we did that. Sid and I, we ate some cream drops that I bought at Maynard's, the confectioners."

"I see. Well, there's nothing more I can do. This is a case for the police. By the way, you've been very lucky. There's no reason in the world why you should be alive."

WITHIN the next twenty-four hours a great many startling things occurred. Dr. Rugg made his report to Inspector Gibbs, a dour, silent, swift-moving man, who believed with every one else that Sydney Barker had died of a particularly ghastly mistake in the making of those chocolates. Without alarming Mr. Maynard, Inspector Gibbs bought a number of cream drops from the same bin and turned them over for analysis to Dr. Henry Letheby. Dr. Letheby's report confirmed Dr. Rugg's suspicions. He found a quarter of a grain of strychnine, sufficient to poison an adult. A sixteenth of a grain would be ample to kill a small child of Sydney Barker's age.

How, in thunder, Inspector Gibbs asked himself, could a reputable confectioner like Maynard permit himself to sell candies impregnated with a deadly toxic? Had the man gone mad? Was he deliberately attempting to poison all Brighton? The idea was too fantastic and Inspector Gibbs brushed it aside. Was it possible, then, that some assistant, some one engaged in the manufacture of the sweets, had poisoned the chocolates? If not, then Maynard was in peril of prosecution for criminal negligence.

Criminal negligence! But that didn't make any sense. A candy maker is hardly apt to keep quantities of strychnine on hand and accidentally mix them with his syrups. At the same time the candies must have been poisoned at Maynard's establishment, for they were made there and not in some distant factory.

An autopsy was performed upon Sydney Barker's body and strychnine was found in the stomach. An inquest was held and during the second hearing a lady of middle-age voluntarily came forward and expressed her desire to testify against the wretched Maynard. The confectioner who sat trembling in coroner's court recognized her at once as the lady who had complained that his chocolates were tainted. She now gave her name as Miss Christiana Edmunds. Taking the stand, she swore:

"I made several purchases of chocolates at Mr. Maynard's shop and I had complained to him about their quality. When I tasted them, I noticed a coppery flavor and they burned my throat. A personal friend of mine, Mrs. Beard, was very nearly poisoned by chocolates which I gave her. I bought them from Mr. Maynard. I believe this is an outrageous occurrence and Mr. Maynard should be punished for his carelessness."

The father of the dead boy was present, too. He testified that he had received an anonymous letter in which the writer stated that he or she had made a purchase of chocolates at Maynard's on March 8, that they were analyzed by a Mr. Schwitzer and found to contain strychnine. The jury returned a verdict of death by misadventure.

None of this interesting evidence did Inspector Gibbs hear. He was far too busy tracking down one or two clues of his own. His investigation had taken him to the pharmacy of a Mr. Garrett: "I'd like," he asked the chemist, "to examine your poison book."

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The law regulating the sale of poisons in England at this time stipulated that the purchaser sign a registry and that he be accompanied by a witness. As a result every chemist had a complete record of purchases of poisons as well as the names and addresses of the purchasers. Inspector Gibbs' attention was drawn to an entry under March 28, 1871. A Mrs. Wood, of Hill Side, Kingston, Surrey, had bought ten grains of strychnine to get rid of some cats who were scratching up her garden. She was accompanied by another lady, a Mrs. Stone, who acted as witness.

"Did you know this lady?" Inspector Gibbs inquired of Mr. Garrett.

"No, not by name, though I've seen her often enough."

"Can you tell me just how she went about buying this poison?"

"CERTAINLY. She bought some toilet things first, then quite offhand she asked me to let her have some strychnine to poison some cats. She made a point of explaining that she had no children and wasn't married so there was no danger of the poison leaving her hands. I told her she would have to have a witness. She went out and came back a little later with this Mrs. Stone and I let her have ten grains of the poison."

"Was that the only occasion upon which she bought poison from you?"

"Oh, no. She returned on the Fifteenth of April and told me that the poison hadn't acted, that she needed some more, this time to kill a dog. She signed the poison book and I gave her another ten grains."

"I notice here that you made another sale on June the Eighth—a quarter of an ounce of strychnine. That is a lot of strychnine, isn't it?"

"Yes, but that purchase was made by Glaisyer and Kemp, the chemists. Apparently they ran short. They sent a boy with a paper signed by them, asking me to oblige them. I scribbled a note on the back, the boy went away and returned a few minutes later with two shillings, sixpence. I put up a drachm in a bottle and he ran off."

"I don't suppose you ever asked Messrs. Glaisyer and Kemp if they received that strychnine?"

"Why, no, it never occurred to me—"

Inspector Gibbs left Mr. Garrett's shop convinced that he had stumbled into one of the strangest cases of his career—for that matter, one of the strangest cases of any detective's career.

His next visit a week later was at Mr. Maynard's shop where the assistant was able to supply him with some extremely stimulating information. It concerned a small boy, one Adam May, who in the early days of April had made a number of purchases of chocolates on behalf of some unnamed and mysterious lady. Inspector Gibbs sought this lad out. He told his story freely.

"Yes, I ran into a lady walking along Portland Street. She asked me if I wanted to earn a few coppers and I said I would. So she told me to go to Maynard's and buy sixpennyworth of chocolate creams. She gave me the money and waited at the end of the street while I ran down to Maynard's. She said she was too tired to walk down there herself. I came back and handed her the chocolates in a paper bag. She looked inside and said they were the wrong ones and then she walked off."

"Did you ever see her again?"

"I did that. Only a few days ago.

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I met her at the top of King Street and she asked me if I would like to run another errand for her. This time she handed me a note and told me to take it to the shop of a Mr. Garrett. Mr. Garrett handed me a parcel which seemed to contain a book. The lady gave me some coppers. I saw her once more, again in King Street. She offered me some candies."

Inspector Gibbs found that during those weeks in April the elusive lady appeared to have been everywhere at the same time. She had persuaded two other lads to buy chocolates for her at Maynard's, but apparently she was hard to please, for each time she had a messenger return the chocolates, saying they were the wrong kind. On these occasions Maynard noticed that they were broken and he threw them back into the bin containing loose, broken stock. It was about this time that the rumors of tainted candies circulated through Brighton. Soon after, in June, little Sydney Barker was poisoned.

Inspector Gibbs required but one link to make his chain of evidence against the mysterious "Mrs. Woods" complete—and that was her real name. By this time the coroner's inquest on Sydney Barker was over and Inspector Gibbs gave his undivided attention to the transcript of the evidence. He realized that Maynard's position was perilous, that unless something was uncovered, and uncovered rapidly, the unfortunate man's business might be ruined forever.

There was one bit of evidence which particularly fascinated Inspector Gibbs. This was the anonymous letter received by Sydney Barker's father. Anonymous letters in themselves were always objects of suspicion. He read it carefully and saw at once that, if it had any connection with the case, it could only have been written by the same "Mrs. Woods" who made the purchases of chocolates and strychnine. He soon confirmed this by comparing the handwriting of the letter and the entries in the poison register. They were identical.

And then Inspector Gibbs noted a serious discrepancy in the anonymous letter. The writer stated that she had bought and had analyzed some chocolate creams on March 8. But Inspector Gibbs knew that the purchases made for her by various boys were long after this date! This decided him. He went at once to Hill Side, Kingston, Surrey, the address given by "Mrs. Woods."

A tall, middle-aged lady answered to his knocking. "I would like to see Mrs Woods?" he inquired.

"I'm afraid you've made a mistake. There is no Mrs. Woods here."

"No? Then with whom have I the pleasure of speaking?"

"I am Christiana Edmunds."

"Indeed? Then Miss Edmunds I must arrest you for the murder of Sydney Barker and I must warn you that anything you say may be used against you." Miss Edmunds said nothing. She had fainted.

III

THE English public dearly loves a good murder trial. It is part of the great English tradition—the pageantry of the law, the cunning of the detectives and, above all, a murderer at once colorful and monstrous. There was nothing colorful about Christiana Edmunds. She was just a dried-up, aging woman whose mind had somehow digressed into dark, eerie channels. Certainly, there was no precedent for the motive which impelled Miss Edmunds to attempt the poisoning of an entire community.

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It was clear, once her pitiful, abortive romance with Dr. Beard was made known, that her sole reason for the attempted wholesale slaughter was to divert suspicion from herself, to make Dr. Beard believe that not she but Maynard was responsible for Mrs. Beard's near-poisoning.

And she did not do this in order to avoid official prosecution, for Dr. Beard had no intention of making a public scandal of the affair. She had done it simply so that he would not hate her, would not believe that she was a poisoner. Here was the fantastic case of a woman who, in order to escape the stigma of poisoner, undertook to poison on a giant scale.

Through Inspector Gibbs' brilliant and painstaking investigation it was revealed how Christiana Edmunds went about her grisly task. It showed the cunning, the determination and the short-sighted stupidity of the typical criminal mind.

First she bought the strychnine from Garrett on the flimsy excuse that she wished to poison some cats. Then she persuaded a number of small boys to buy chocolates for her at Maynard's. The choice of very young boys was especially subtle, for these happy-go-lucky little street Arabs were the last people in Brighton who would be apt to attach any sinister significance to the business.

With a fine knitting-needle she would drill a hole in each candy, then drop in a quarter of a grain of strychnine. Her smattering of chemistry was enough to tell her that this was a fatal dose. She would then return the chocolates on the pretext that they were the wrong sort, knowing that they would find their way into the loose candy bin of Mr. Maynard and thence into the stomachs of some unsuspecting Brighton citizens. She employed seventy grains of strychnine in this way.

But in this plan Miss Edmunds betrayed the basic illogicality of the criminal insane—for she was insane. It apparently never occurred to her that the police would be inclined to doubt the possibility of a confectioner poisoning his own chocolates. And yet this was the very basis of her plan.

But Christiana Edmunds was not through yet. Arrested, she prepared to fight to the end, not necessarily for her freedom, but for her love for Dr. Beard. She was tried at the Central Criminal Court on January 15, 1872. Mr. Baron Martin presided. She was defended by Serjeant Ballantyne, one of the greatest criminal advocates England has ever known. Mr. Harry Poland conducted the prosecution.

It was known as the "Brighton poisoning case" and was remarkable for its effect on the career of a boy who was to become a world-famous attorney. There was in the courtroom a 14-year-old boy, witnessing his first trial. He was a handsome, ruddy-faced, sturdy lad with a mass of black curls, and he sat by his father's side, fascinated by the intricate legal proceedings. The way in which seemingly unrelated bits of evidence were forged into a damning chain, the eloquence and power of Mr. Poland, the panoply of the law, so intrigued the lad that he then and there resolved to become an attorney. His name was Edward Marshall Hall, later Sir Edward Marshall Hall.

Brilliant though Serjeant Ballantyne was, there was little he could do against the evidence. It was shown that Miss Edmunds had persuaded a boy to go to Mr. Garrett with a note purporting to come from the coroner, asking him to hand over his poison book. This was the parcel about which Adam May had

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spoken to Inspector Gibbs. The coroner knew nothing about the note, and the book was never returned, but Inspector Gibbs had already seen it.

MRS. STONE was subpoenaed and testified that she was a milliner, that the defendant had come into her shop, complained of neuralgia and begged her to act as a witness while she purchased some strychnine for killing cats. The firm of Glaisyer and Kemp, of course, denied ever having asked Mr. Garrett for strychnine.

The consummate effrontery of Miss Edmunds was displayed in the note which she had sent anonymously to Sydney Barker's father. She had written: "Had I lost my child in such a sad way, as a parent I should feel myself in duty bound to take proceedings against the seller of the sweets."

The prejudice against the defendant ran so high locally that the trial was adjourned and removed to the Old Bailey in London. Here a ludicrous incident somewhat lightened the horror of the proceeding. Miss Edmunds complained that she was suffering from heart trouble. A Dr. Riley was dispatched to find a stethoscope. He in turn asked a policeman to find one for him. The policeman returned eventually carrying a telescope, explaining it was the smallest he could get!

During the early stages of the trial Miss Edmunds had remained calm and unemotional, but when medical experts testified that there was nothing very much the matter with her heart, she became hysterical and wailed: "Oh, how shall I sleep tonight?"

The only defense possible was one of insanity and Serjeant Ballantyne found ample evidence in his client's background and history to support it. The defendant's mother, Mrs. A. Christiana Edmunds, took the stand, but was able to do little beyond staging a scene of violent hysterics.

Christiana Edmunds, she finally managed to tell the jury, came of a long line of degenerates and lunatics. Her father died in Peckham Asylum in 1847, and a brother, Arthur Burn Edmunds, died in the Earlswood Asylum in 1866.

As for Christiana, the Rev. J. H. Cole, chaplain of Lewes Jail, testified: "I have observed the prisoner and was struck by the peculiar formation of the eye, her unnatural calmness and exceeding levity, her extraordinary laugh and her sudden transition from tears to laughter. In short, I consider her of unsound mind." A somewhat unusual procedure for a cleric to testify in the character of a medical expert, but this opinion was confirmed by Dr. Woods, of St. Luke's Hospital. To him the prisoner had tearfully whined: "I would rather be convicted than brought in insane."

She made a final effort to clear herself. She betrayed the one human quality which had stirred in her—her love for Dr. Beard. Now she accused him of being the real instigator of the crimes. No one paid much attention to this wild statement and, indeed, Miss Edmunds herself retracted it, admitting it was the desperate effort of an hysterical moment.

She wanted to be convicted rather than declared insane and the jury obliged. They pronounced her guilty and sentenced her to die. When Mr. Baron Martin asked her if she had any last statement to make, she declared: "I wish to be tried on the other charges brought against me and I want my whole connection with Dr. Beard gone into. I am sure Serjeant Ballan-

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tyne will go on with the case. It is owing to the treatment I have received from Dr. Beard that I have been brought into this trouble."

This amazing declaration was received in contemptuous silence. Miss Edmunds gazed madly around the courthouse and screaming, "Come on!" and vanished through the prisoners' exit.

AT the turn of the twentieth century a former Cabinet Minister was being shown around Broadmoor Asylum for the Criminal Insane. As he passed through the women's section an angular, tall creature with flashing eyes and a knife-thin slit of a mouth screamed at him. She was scolding him because he had failed to bow to her when he entered the room where she was sitting, working on her interminable tapestries.

"I am a lady by birth and education," she said proudly. "My enemies keep me here because I know all their sins and could have them clapped into jail if I were free."

Then she fell into steely silence. "Who is that poor creature?" the ex-Cabinet Minister asked his guide.

"Her name is Christiana Edmunds." And he told the statesman her story.

"She was sentenced to death," the guide said in conclusion, "but the Home Secretary reprieved her. He was convinced she was insane and if she was not insane then, she certainly is now. Nevertheless, there was a terrible outcry against reprieving her at the time. She's been a lonely, pitiful figure here, though she has always insisted upon being treated as a perfect lady. You see, she really does come from a fine family, even if most of them were mad. Back in 1872 people said that's why they didn't hang her—on account of her family.

"She never tires of speaking of her infatuation for Dr. Beard and she referred to him with the greatest affection long after he died. She refuses to associate with any of the inmates who are not her social equals. There was a girl who came here, a servant girl and she attached herself to Miss Edmunds. We let her act as her servant as long as the girl wanted to.

"She still likes to write letters to famous people asking them to have tea with her. She sometimes thinks she's in her own home. Of course, the letters never reach the post office, but she gets a lot of fun writing them."

CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR AUGUST

(*Continued from Page* 101)

Starkes, St. Louis, Mo.; °Jack-Stay, Tucson, Ariz.; Hot Summers, Minneapolis, Minn.; °Dick Tate, Battle Creek, Mich.; °Old Timer, Guthrie, Okla.; °F. E. Tinkham, Ripon, Wis.; Trams, South Bend, Ind.; B. A. Tress, Baskett, Ky.; Paw Tucket, Orlando, Fla.; Uuem, Dayton, Ohio; R. W. West, Passaic, N. J.; °H. F. Wickner, Las Vegas, Nev.; °E. A. Wilson, Oakdale, Pa.; Sam Wilson, Chicago, Ill.; °Doctor X, Kansas City, Mo.; Lew Zirn, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.; °A. R. Zorn, Perris, Calif.

Twenty-nine—Arrowhead, Pawtucket, R. I.; R. L. Blaha, Newark, N. J.; Cucumber, Redondo Beach, Calif.; Dr. S. F. Hedgcock, Glencoe, Ill.; Jaefsee, Accord, N. Y.; °Jayel, Canton, Ohio; °Jayem, Bellingham, Wash.; Keystonian, New York, N. Y.; °A. Meredith, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Nedyah, New York, N. Y.; Rena Patton, Los Angeles, Calif.; Mrs. Bruce Richardson, Saginaw, Mich.; °Romeo, Waynesboro, Pa.; °Mrs. Alice Routh, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Little Willy, Johnstown, Pa.; I. Workem, Bismarck, N. Dak.

Twenty-eight—D. E. Boliver, Hedley, Tex.; Gold Bug, Newburgh, N. Y.; Kenneth Currell, Johnstown, Pa.; °Mrs. F. M. Ingalls, Glendale, Calif.; Kappa Kappa, Seattle, Wash.; Ker, Saginaw, Mich.; G. E. Long, Cripple Creek, Colo.; Sherlac, Philadelphia, Pa.; Box Six, Lapeer, Mich.; °G. A. Slight, Newburgh, N. Y.; Clement E. Taylor, Oakland, Calif.; Elsie Turner, Leesburg, Fla.; °W. R. W., Chicago, Ill.; Charles E. Zirbes, Clinton, Iowa.

(*Continued on Page* 135)

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Seven Faces

By Max Brand

What has happened—

JOHN COBB, eccentric millionaire, fleeing from New York to Chicago under the protection of Detectives Angus Campbell and Patrick O'Rourke because of threats against his life, vanished mysteriously from the train. O'Rourke has gone back along the line with a young chap named McGuire, found the millionaire's body near Cobb's estate. The man was wired to a chair in a summer house, burned beyond recognition. The main clue which O'Rourke found in Cobb's home was seven photographic portraits. One of them is that of Charles Latimer, also a passenger on the train. He also captures a noncommittal elderly fellow named Pete, who escapes with the aid of an unseen accomplice, " Champ."

Meanwhile, Campbell, convinced that the solution of the strange mystery is still

John Cobb's Disappearance Ended in Death. His Death Gives Birth to a Brooding Mystery Which Neither O'Rourke, Irish Manhunter, Nor Campbell, Scotch Strategist, Can Hope to Solve Alone

This story began in *Detective Fiction Weekly* for October 17

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on the train, has continued his journey. He uncovers evidence which leads him to believe that Charles Latimer, a beautiful girl named Josephine Worth, and a bearded, foreign chap called Grosvenor, were all in Cobb's stateroom before the disappearance.

When the train stops in Buffalo, Josephine Worth pays a quick visit to Jim, a man who is waiting for her there. Latimer follows the girl, and is trailed in turn by Detective Campbell. As Josephine is leaving again, Latimer manages to get a yellowed newspaper clipping from the table. He is surprised by Jim, fights his way clear and barely manages to catch the train again.

Campbell subsequently rummages in Latimer's effects until he finds the paper, reads an account in it of a bonanza strike in the Willoughby Lode, made in 1902 by seven young miners. Their names were Winslow, Champion, Worth, Latimer, Waterson, Markham and Glenn. Campbell is just realizing that this is a valuable lead when Latimer wrests the paper from him.

It is also clear to Campbell now that Josephine and Latimer are working against each other. Later the girl is surprised by Latimer in his stateroom, reading the same aged paper. After some bickering she suggests that they throw in together. Latimer distrusts her, but has become intrigued with her. He asks for a kiss in payment for the gun he had returned to her.

After a moment Josephine looked out of the window again.

"I knew you wouldn't kiss me," she said.

"How did you know?" Latimer asked.

She laughed a little. "I'm really a very gifted girl!"

Now go on with the story!

CHAPTER XVII

Pot Shot

WHEN the train reached Jackson, newspapers and telegrams came aboard at once, the telegrams first. In the distribution, Angus Campbell received three of the open-faced yellow envelopes. Two of them were in fact for him, but the third was addressed to that fellow with the black eyebrows and the red mouth, Grosvenor.

Campbell ruthlessly opened it and read:

MEET YOU CLIFTON CHICAGO WITH FIRST INSTALLMENT.

The signature was: "PARTNER."

The place of sending was the town of Lassiter, Minnesota.

"Here!" Campbell called to the lounge-car waiter. "This was given to me by mistake. Know anybody called Grosvenor?"

"That gentleman right back there," said the waiter. "Thank you, sir."

He took the opened telegram back to the end of the car, where Grosvenor was just rising from his chair to stretch his legs on the platform. At the same time a pair of riveters, at work on new building or repair work in the station, opened up with a frightful roar.

Grosvenor, receiving the telegram, scanned it and then looked sharply towards Campbell, and Campbell, from the corner of his eye, was aware of that half startled, fixed, angry surveillance. He said to himself, as he opened his own message: "Rotten! Something rotten about Grosvenor. In Cobb's stateroom . . . rotten!"

Something rotten about Grosvenor, something odd about the fear that had been in Grosvenor's face when he realized that a detective had opened his telegram. A detective must weave suspicions as fragile as spider threads until he has made a net strong enough to catch a tiger; and Campbell felt a sudden tugging along his nerves, as though prey already were caught in the net.

He bought a newspaper, tucked it under his arm, and went on with his telegrams. The tall, stalking form of Grosvenor passed down the aisle before

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him, eyes fixed upon a proud future, disdaining the littleness of ordinary men.

The first wire was from Buffalo, reading:

PARTY HAS WEEKLY LEASE HAS OCCUPIED APARTMENT FIVE DAYS NAME CHESTER PARKINSON HABITS REGULAR DRINKS LITTLE OTHERWISE UNKNOWN HERE.

The alias preyed heavily on Campbell's mind as he turned to his second and longer telegram from New York. It read:

WILLOUGHBY LODE LOCATED BY STEPHEN WILLOUGHBY 1902 ENDANGERED BY RISING WATERS IN SHAFTS 1903 GENERALLY ABANDONED 1904 AND 1905 SURFACE VEIN DISCOVERED AND WORKED IN 1932 BY JOHN COBB MILLIONS TAKEN FROM GROUND IN ONE YEAR STOP YOUR NAMES UNTRACEABLE SO FAR EXCEPT FOR PETER WINSLOW CONVICTED MURDER 1903 GIVEN LIFE PARDONED 1932.

The "Peter" before that name of Winslow knocked at the door of the detective's mind. Peter it had been, he could swear, in the list which he had seen in the stolen copy of the *Willoughby Messenger*. Another link, freshly forged in the chain, grappled a new and perhaps important fact to the list which Campbell was compiling.

His mind scattered through his evidence. Grosvenor, Josephine Worth, big Charles Latimer—all in the stateroom of Cobb before the kidnaping and murder of the millionaire. The adventure of Latimer and the girl in Buffalo. The warning from O'Rourke about Latimer. The guilty face of Grosvenor when he read the telegram which had been opened. The intimacy of Latimer with the girl, and yet the fact that he had obviously spied on her in Buffalo. And always the knowledge that in the background of this case were fifteen millions of dollars—even if they were largely newspaper dollars. It seemed to Campbell that the clues enriched him more than gold. Mentally he was rubbing his hands as he stood up from his chair.

He sauntered down the aisle to take his turn on the platform, the newspaper still under his arm.

In the list of the old names, including a Latimer, there had been the Winslow first of all, the fellow who had made the rich strike and then gone to prison for murder, to prison for life. With Winslow as partners were Latimer, Worth, and all the rest.

Campbell, reaching the end of the car at this moment, rested a hand against the wall and took a breath.

Worth was the name of the girl. Josephine Worth. She must represent one of the seven. Chance does not appear in such forms. Coincidence never occurs in groups and clusters of events.

DESCENDING to the platform, he shook open the newspaper. The uproar of the two riveters was joined now by another pair, turning the wide hollow of the station into a frightful bedlam which drilled gradually through the ears and deep into the brain. But Campbell forgot the racket as he glanced over the repeated story of the murder of John Cobb. It was a long and detailed manuscript, by this time, and, above all, there was a new edition in the form of a considerable story about the presumptive heir, Lawrence Pelton, whom the Press representative had just interviewed.

The article ran:

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From the desolation of the Minnesota wheat fields to the presumptive possession of fifteen million dollars is the happy fate of Lawrence Purvis Pelton who, when informed by this correspondent of the death of his cousin, was struck dumb. When told the terrible details of the death he closed his eyes and after a moment was able to say: "If it costs the entire fortune, I'll run them to ground!"

In a smooth field near the house stood his powerful airplane, an amphibian with which he was tinkering when the party arrived, one of us an airplane mechanic from the flying field near Lassiter. . . .

Here the mind of Campbell paused and he took careful note. Lassiter . . . from that town Grosvenor's partner had sent the telegram. Campbell swallowed a grin of joy and read on:

. . . from the flying field near Lassiter, bringing with him a broken part of the motor whose absence had kept the owner out of the air for several days. The newly rich man, suffering from a burn across the mouth caused by lighting a cigarette when his mustache was moistened with grease and gasoline from working on the engine, looked like a poor mechanic. He has been on the farm for over a year and the airplane is the last symbol of the fortune which has slipped through his hands.

Campbell recalled the weazened ferret of a John Cobb whom he and O'Rourke had taken under their protection for the trip to Chicago. That this fellow could have been loved either by woman or man was too absurd.

So Campbell grinned inwardly while the thundering and cataracting uproar from the riveters bursted upon his brain. He had gone down the track a little past the end of the train; now he turned and sauntered back. He was nearly opposite the first coupling, at the end of the lounge car, when the hat was jerked from his head.

A wind scurried it rapidly before him, so that he had to run in pursuit. When he picked it up, he stood for a moment stiff, staring. Then he looked up and scanned the windows.

Yonder a few people were leaning out, talking, waving to acquaintances along the platform.

Someone was calling out: "All aboard!" The last farewells shrilled thin and distant through the thundering of the riveters. And still Campbell stood in his place examining a double hole which had been cut through the top of his hat. It was of the dimension of a forty-five caliber slug.

The train had begun to roll away before Campbell came to himself and ran after it. . . .

CHAPTER XVIII

Too Many Clues

EVEN before the train reached Buffalo, Patrick O'Rourke was pacing the living room floor in the house of John Cobb while McGuire sat half asleep by the fire. The shades still were down and the daylight merely served to make them visible. Rain fell in thin whispers and smashing volleys while the wind talked to itself far away or came yelling in the ear of the house.

"Why couldn't Cobb keep servants, Mac?" asked O'Rourke.

"Why won't a mean dog keep company with another pup? Because it thinks every other dog is like itself—ready to bite."

"You mean that Cobb was afraid of other people, eh?"

"Sure. When he went down the street—and that wasn't often—he looked at the face of everybody that was far away from him. He kept his eyes squinted, studying every mug that came along."

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"Why did Pete and Champ keep coming back here to the house?" said O'Rourke.

"They wanted the seven pictures," said McGuire. "That's what they wanted, and when they got 'em, they cleared out."

"They didn't want the pictures—not first of all," O'Rourke objected. "Look here."

He went to the davenport and pointed out half a dozen small holes in the tapestry covering, mere needle holes.

"Probes," said O'Rourke. "They been probing the furniture to find something small. And come in here."

He led the way into the dressing room and opened one of the doors. He pointed to a shelf on which handkerchiefs were piled on the one side and socks on the other.

"The piles ain't very neat," said McGuire.

"Was Cobb neat?"

"Yeah, sure he was. You mean that somebody else stacked up those things?"

"We found Pete in the cellar," said O'Rourke, "but that's not where he'd been spending his time. He'd been going through this place with a fine-tooth comb, putting everything back, but not putting it back quite right. Look at the shirts on the shelf below, too. And here's the rod with the suits hanging. See those two pockets turned inside out? Something small was what Pete was looking for. The question is: Will he come back?"

"He won't come back," said McGuire.

He pulled up a shade. Through the wet dimness of the morning half a dozen figures were visible snooping across the lawn through the trees.

"He won't come back," repeated McGuire. "I knew that half the town would be up here looking things over. Murder gets people worked up. Like buried bones get a dog excited. They'll be walking around, everywhere."

"Maybe you're right," said O'Rourke. "I dunno. Pete is about the toughest that I ever seen. I've got to go out. Can I leave you here alone?"

"Sure," said McGuire.

"You been rapped once, tonight," answered O'Rourke.

"That's why I won't be rapped again," replied McGuire.

"All right. You stay on here, and keep your gun handy."

THE back-trail to which O'Rourke directed himself lay right up through the trees to the summer-house where Cobb's body had been found. On the way, he marked a dozen rain-coated figures; at the summer-alcove itself two or three score were gathered silently, staring motionless at the fire-stained chair in which the dead man had sat.

When O'Rourke appeared, a murmur went through the spectators. They turned to him. The water dripped steadily from the brims of their hats as they stared at the man of the law. O'Rourke waved to them cheerfully.

"Found anything for me, boys?"

They all nodded to him, brilliancies of water flinging past their faces. They were pleased by the familiar address of the "great detective" but they had found nothing.

He picked up a handful of the sand through which he had trampled the night before. A dense circle gathered around him and watched with bending heads and peering eyes.

"Any of you know where sand like this could be fetched from?" he asked.

"Yeah. The bank of the river," said someone.

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"It's more white than the river sand," said another.

"Back by Peekskill you get sand like that," said another.

O'Rourke, sifting the sand from one palm to the other, noted a little black pebble. He dug his thumb into it. The outer blackness came away under the edge of his nail and revealed the gray glint of the true stone beneath. There was tar or thick oil about. Wherever that pebble had been lying. And O'Rourke headed towards the railroad.

Behind him the crowd fanned out in a moving mob that remained a dozen paces behind at the nearest.

So he took the back trail up which he had come the night before. The daylight at its worst was better than the torchlight by which he had examined the ground in the first place. The grass, to be sure, nourished by the freshness of the rain, had sprung up straight again, almost everywhere. But in a flat, naked bit of clay surface he found a single footprint lightly embedded, the sharpness of the edges a little dimmed and rounded by the downpour.

Beside it, O'Rourke squatted on his heels and, after a moment, he took out his tracery of the shoe of John Cobb, for this mark was also small for a man and large for a woman. The tracery corresponded perfectly!

He would not believe it, at first. John Cobb had been chloroformed and passed through the window of the stateroom. His body then had been dragged brutally up the slope.

That was the story which he had to believe, but here was a fairly good proof that John Cobb had not been dragged at all, but that he had walked over the ground.

What was the weight, then, that had been pulled over the grass so carelessly? Was it John Cobb that had stepped here, or was it a man wearing the shoes of Cobb?

There was not much doubt about the print. The smallness of it spoke loudly. Besides, there was the angle of the front edge of the heel, and the hand-fitted curve of the forward sole. It was most surely the footprint of Cobb's shoe.

O'Rourke, rising, lighted a cigar and cursed softly, gently, thoughtfully.

He went on, still in his thought, toward the railroad. And his brain was spinning. When he had slipped through the railroad fence, he looked up and down the side of the track with a grimly expectant eye until a small, light-colored patch was noted. To it he went at once. It was sand, of the exact quality which he had found at the summer alcove. And in it, here and there, were little pebbles. Streaks of old oil were sprayed into the sand. Some of the pebbles had turned black with it. Moreover, the loosely compacted surface of the ground had been scooped away, here, as though a quantity of the sand had been carried away. A small pool of rainwater was filling the hollow.

CHAPTER XIX

O'Rourke Cements a Friendship

O'ROURKE, savagely chewing the end of his cigar, tried to fit the new suggestions into the old picture.

John Cobb, when the train stops, recovers from the fumes of chloroform, finds that he is missing whatever the thieves took while the chloroform was operating upon him—and instead of sending for his double bodyguard to inform them of what has happened, he uses the emergency alarm, stops the

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train, climbs through the window, and drops to the ground.

O'Rourke grunted. It was the sort of a theory that made him blush, for he thought of the corrugated-iron face of Corrigan and his own voice suggested such a theory.

But he continued the logical train of events as that footprint and that scooped place in the sand suggested it to him. John Cobb, having left the train, skulked behind one of the piles of ties until the train passed on. He then took off his coat—or some bag which he had prepared for the purpose, and bending in the rain without shelter from the wind and the wet—his overcoat had been left on the overland—he proceeded to scoop up the sand until he had placed a considerable weight in the coat—or bag—which he then proceeded to drag up the hillside in order to lay a trail to the spot where he sat in an iron chair and waited for himself to be burned alive. . . .

Even omitting the last step, the whole theory stunk to heaven in the nostrils of logical Patrick O'Rourke. It was nonsense which he could not possibly offer to Corrigan. It was nonsense which he could not present to a far greater man than Corrigan—one Patrick O'Rourke, first-grade detective. He was left, in fact, with no theory at all.

He trudged back up the hillside through the woods, struggling with the problem, and remembering what Corrigan was always saying: "The thing that ain't possible is the thing that links up everything."

Usually, he preferred when analyzing a crime to put himself in the criminal's boots and to walk backwards to the crime. This mental gale made the earthly one through which he was passing a thing of no moment, though the trees were bending to the storm and pale billows of wind and rain marked the grass and dimmed the air with their passing.

Coming to the house, he went into a darkened living room. The fire had burned down, and McGuire was not there.

"Hey, Mac!" called O'Rourke.

His voice had no echo. It dropped away into a murderous outburst of the storm which jumped close to the little house and shook it with both hands in a fury.

"Ah, well, damn it!" muttered O'Rourke. And he thought somewhat yearningly of Campbell, that adroit, astute, wakeful man who habitually was at the point where he was most needed.

"McGuire! Hey, McGuire!" shouted O'Rourke, and through a breathing space in the uproar of the storm he heard the echoes of his voice fly thronging through the house.

He started back through the kitchen and pantry. The pure white of the kitchen was as clean as a bowl. He pushed open the door of the dressing room—and shut it suddenly, softly behind him. For McGuire lay in a corner on his back with blood on his face.

He had one arm across his breast, the other thrown straight out, as though he were wigwagging, or doing a bit of semaphore. A dark, red, glimmering pool spread out around the middle of his body.

"They done you in, kid," said O'Rourke. "The dirty devils . . . they done you in!"

He took out a new cigar and lighted it, spitting the bit from the end far away across the floor.

He took off his hat at the last moment and sloshed it down, a loose rag. Then he kneeled. He pushed his hand

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under the edge of the lad's coat over the heart. The heart was pumping away steadily, strongly.

HE saw what had happened, after that. There was a streak of red on the corner of the mopboard where McGuire's head had struck. The blood on McGuire's face came merely from a shallow scalp wound—granted that there were no fracture beneath. But a far more serious injury was the source of the blood which had soaked into the rug and pooled upon the surface of it. A bullet had entered the front of the thigh of the right leg and issued behind through the buttock. He lifted McGuire's knee. The bone was not broken.

O'Rourke almost laughed, in the greatness of his relief. He picked up his wet hat and pulled it down over his eyes. Then he dragged off McGuire's trousers and began to make a bandage with strips of sheet from the bed.

The lad stirred, groaned, gripped at the air with both hands.

"I'm gonna bash your head in—" growled McGuire. "Hey, O'Rourke!" he added, "I thought that Pete—"

"You're gonna be all right," said O'Rourke, soothingly. "Lay back and take it easy. It was Pete, was it?"

McGuire braced his shoulders and bleeding head against the wall.

He said: "I heard something, just a light bump. I come in here. All I seen when I opened the door was those shoes. Before I lifted my eyes, a gun went bang. I saw Pete and another fellow jump for the kitchen door. I tried to follow them. My leg wouldn't work. I dropped and whanged something and it went black."

"All right," said O'Rourke. "Am I hurting you much, kid?"

"No, it's O.K.," McGuire answered. "Think of that dirty Pete, will you?"

"What else would I be thinking about?" demanded O'Rourke.

He was looking sidewise at the shoes. He had not noticed them, at first, and now he saw a line of them topsy turvy lying outside an open door of the dressing room shelves. Within, other pairs remained.

Another strip of the sheet, torn into a narrower portion, he wrapped around McGuire's head.

"How is it, Mac?" he asked.

"Fine as silk," nodded McGuire, twisting a grin onto his pale face.

"You're a good-plucked one," O'Rourke commented. "Mac, I like you fine."

"That goes double," replied McGuire.

O'Rourke went to the back door and opened it. Now that the storm had lulled a little, the lurking watchers were coming out from the edge of the woods again to draw a little nearer to the dead man's house. He waved a pair of them to him.

"You got a car around, boys?" he asked.

They had one. Would they take a wounded fellow to his home in the next town? Their eyes were starting out in a happy excitement and pride. It would be a banner day in their lives, of course.

When they had loaded McGuire into the rear of the automobile, sitting aslant to ease the tortured leg, O'Rourke leaned inside.

"Would you like to come to the big town and work with me?"

"Me? I say yes!" McGuire breathed.

Their hands closed together. "I'll be seeing you," said O'Rourke.

"You bet," answered McGuire. "So long!"

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"So long, kid."

O'Rourke stood back and watched the car start.

A side stroke of the wind made him stumble and nearly lifted the wet hat from his head. He was damp all over, damp to the skin, against which his clothes stuck; but his heart was light as he watched the car swerve out of sight down the drive.

It seemed to O'Rourke that he himself was again young, at the beginning of things. It almost seemed to him, for the brief moment, that his hands once more were clean. . . .

CHAPTER XX

Old Friends

IN the house again, O'Rourke roused the fire to a good, strong, companionable blaze. After that, he went back into the dressing room to pick up the search where it had been left off.

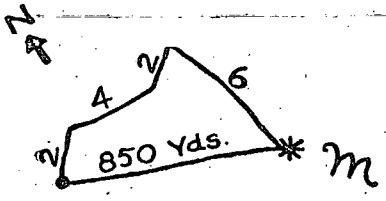
The section of shelves which now was open contained several rows of shoes. Pete had been working right across. The shoes which had been moved had not yet been replaced but lay scattered on the floor, the hollow aluminum trees removed and the paper with which the trees were lined in the shoes torn to expose the bright metal beneath. The missing object must be very small and flat if it could be pasted in under the sheathing of paper.

The remaining shoes he took out one by one, tapped the heels and soles to sound any hollow places, removed the aluminum trees, and tore out the paper linings. He had out the fourth or fifth of these and was about to put down the trees when he noticed that the metal under the paper did not show its usual clean face. Instead, there was a blur which, when he turned the tree to the light, proved to be yellowish paper, a thin sheet of it, slightly wrinkled by the manner in which it had been fitted to the curve of the aluminum.

He had the rest of the outer blotting paper off in a moment and easily detached that inner fold of paper. The moment it was open in his hand, he knew that he had what Pete and Champ had been searching for so industriously. Perhaps it was for the sake of this design that John Cobb had been wired into the chair. Perhaps because he would not reveal the place where the mystery was hidden, he had been burned to death by the tormentors.

The bit of paper was perhaps five by seven. One edge was rough as though it had been attached to a writing pad. The quality was cheap. It was hardly better than a school copy-pad and it had been folded twice across so long that as he opened it the paper cracked and threatened to break off into four sections.

What O'Rourke saw was a very simple design with figures written along the sides of the lines in the following manner:



The longer O'Rourke stared at the thing, the more his heart fell. This design, so invaluable to Pete—so worth murder itself—had to him hardly any meaning.

The 2, 4, 2, 6 no doubt meant hundreds of yards. The clumsily sprawling "M" at the side had no meaning at all, so far as he could see. But, given the key point or any point on

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this design, it was plain that one of the locations, either that marked by the heavy dot or that signaled by the star, perhaps, must be a spot of the greatest importance.

Here was a treasure, in short, which no man could use unless he possessed along with it some additional information. He needed a key point over which this design could be superimposed.

Here the telephone rang with a sudden and terrible loudness. His heart jumped; it was a moment before he could force himself back into the pantry and take down the instrument.

"Hello! Hello!" he called.

"Mr. O'Rourke?" called a strongly nasal voice.

"That's me," he answered.

"We just thought we'd ring you up," whined the voice, "because Officer Willisen and another State trooper have just picked up the man you want, and another fellow that was along with him. We've sent out a car to take 'em to you. Is that right?"

"Right?" shouted O'Rourke. "What could be wrong about it? Of course it's right! I'll be waiting. Get the name of the second man? Is it Champ something or other?"

"He ain't a talkin' kind," said the voice. "Maybe you can get something out of him, but not us."

O'ROURKE hung up and went back to the living room. He poured himself a good hooker of whiskey and spilled it down his throat. That lonely fear which had been standing like a ghost behind him now vanished away, leaving him feeling like himself again.

He heard the rush of automobile tires a moment later and got to the door in time to see a big sedan draw up. One trooper was inside it in the back seat. Into the front seat beside the driver had been squeezed Pete and his companion. A second trooper followed on his motorcycle.

O'Rourke, on the threshold, rubbed his hands cheerfully, like a host welcoming guests at an inn. He called out and waved to them as Pete and his companion got from the car, their wrists handcuffed together.

"Good work, boys!" called O'Rourke. "Where'd you get 'em, eh?"

The trooper on the motorcycle swerved his machine to a stop at the side of the entrance and dismounted.

"Found 'em heading up the old quarry road. There's nothing at the end of that road. Nobody would be traveling it."

"I'm proud to know you," said O'Rourke. "I'm mighty proud. Come inside here and have a drink. How are you, Pete? You wouldn't know how glad I am to see you. Hello, Champ!"

"Hello, O'Rourke," said the companion of Pete, and then suddenly pressed his lips together.

"That's all right," said O'Rourke. "I would have known that that was your name, because you've got the looks of a champion, is what you've got. Come on in and sit by the fire."

Champ was of an age with Pete but so much fuller in flesh that he looked a good bit younger. When he came into the house and took off his hat, he exposed a rosy, bald head without a hair on it, except at the base of the skull. That head of his was built high behind and sloped all the way down to the eyes; except for the wrinkles in it, it was hard to define and bound the limits of the forehead. He had twinkling eyes unshadowed by eyelashes, a blunt bit of nose stuck in the middle of things, and a wide, cheer-

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fully smiling mouth. He was not tall, but he was built massively from foot to shoulder, and his skin was weathered to such a brown as only long days at sea can give, as a rule. He had a husky, bubbling voice, as though he had just been eating greasy food. His bright cheer was that of one who makes the best of everything.

"Did you show these fellows to McGuire?" asked O'Rourke of Willisen.

The trooper nodded. "He recognized 'em," he said.

O'Rourke said: "You boys step out there into the kitchen and find yourselves something to drink. Sit down, Pete. You and Champ take these chairs over there. Good to see you again, Pete."

And Pete answered, as the other three moved on into the kitchen: "Why, it's like old times, O'Rourke, ain't it? It ain't the years you've known a man, it's the things you've done with him that counts, ain't it?"

"That's right," said O'Rourke.

Willisen paused at the doorway.

"You gonna be comfortable, all right, along with the two of 'em?" he asked.

O'Rourke nodded at the tall young man.

"I'm gonna be right at home with 'em," he said.

CHAPTER XXI

Equal Shares

THE door closed behind Willisen. Mild sounds of celebration began to issue from the kitchen, voices bursting out in laughter and ending in sudden silences.

"When you come to think about it," said Pete, in his pleasant way, "it was hard luck that *we* had, wasn't it? How could we know that the damned road only went to a quarry that wasn't a quarry no more? Who'd think of keeping up a road as slick as a baby's cheek when it didn't go no place any more?"

"It *was* mean luck," agreed O'Rourke. "How much you figure on getting for shooting down young McGuire?"

"I dunno what you mean," answered Pete.

"You wouldn't know, would you? I guess it was Champ that did it?"

"Champ, did you do it?" asked Pete, turning to his companion with concern in his face.

"Put a slug into a fine young fellow like that?" echoed Champ. "What sort of people does O'Rourke think we are?"

"Just boys out on a vacation," said O'Rourke. "That's all I think you are. Just a pair of fine, high-spirited kids."

"Now you get the idea," agreed Champ, and grinned.

"You didn't have your eye fixed on nothing like this, did you?" asked O'Rourke. He took out his wallet with slow precision, shifted his cigar across his mouth to the opposite corner with a powerful waving contortion of the lips, and jerked a puff of smoke towards the ceiling. Afterwards, he drew out the old fold of paper. The other two sat bolt upright, staring fixedly.

"Belong to you?" asked O'Rourke.

Champ had flushed a brilliant red; Pete was gray. They devoured the paper with their eyes.

"Now listen to me, you muggs," said O'Rourke, dropping his voice. "You know what comes to you for this job?"

"We're gonna be retired to an old people's home, I guess," said Pete.

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"More'n likely you'll take a trip up Salt Creek," said O'Rourke.

"What's that mean?" asked Champ.

"The chair, you fool," said Pete.

"I dunno," explained O'Rourke, "maybe it would turn out all right, and you'd only get twenty years for burglary, and felonious assault. But maybe somebody would get mean. Cobb murdered like that, and then the pair of you breaking into his house to search for what he wouldn't tell you about. Maybe a jury would take and believe that you fellows did the killing. What you think, Pete?"

He said: "Yeah, you're right. They'll give us the chair."

"Now suppose we take and look at it from my angle," said O'Rourke. "How young do I look to you?"

"You look like whiskey still could make a boy out of you," suggested Champ, and he smiled in the most friendly fashion.

"I look that way, do I?" muttered O'Rourke.

Champ leaned forward. O'Rourke's gun jumped into his hand and he snorted out a cloud of cigar smoke.

"Don't make those quick moves," said O'Rourke. "I know the pair of you are regular chums, but I walked in my sleep one night when I was a kid, and I've been nervous ever since."

He pushed the old fold of paper forward.

"You draw the design inside of this, Pete?" he asked.

"I ain't an artist," said Pete.

Said O'Rourke: "Now, suppose this job meant something big, how much would I be declared in?"

They stared at him, then at one another.

Speech seemed to be qualifying the brightness of their eyes, so perfect was their mutual understanding.

At last, Pete glanced back at O'Rourke. He said, softly: "Equal shares, O'Rourke."

"Shares of what?" asked O'Rourke.

They looked at one another again; again there was that silent semblance of interchanging speech. Then Pete said: "Three or four million in an outeropping vein of ore."

Said Champ: "It ain't ore. It's just rock with the gold soaked into it. Call it a vein if you want to. I'd call it a wing of the government mint!"

"I come in equal partner, do I?" asked O'Rourke.

"We make an even split," declared Pete.

For an instant, real temptation gripped O'Rourke. It went through his brain like a sweet poison. He had to look down at the muzzle of his gun and breathe out a cloud of smoke.

He was still looking down when a hand, withered and lean, gripped the barrel of the Colt and jerked it out of his grasp. That was Pete. Another hand, which came from Champion, caught him by the coat lapels and pulled him suddenly forward. A blow smashed his head down against the table.

IT seemed to O'Rourke that a jingling of small bells was sounding like Christmas on the margin of his mind. Afterwards, he was aware of pain that filled his head.

A voice was yelling: "Yes, sedan. Number is 1408. Got it? Two of 'em. Send the alarm. You've got their descriptions. Put it on the radio. Hurry it. O'Rourke is maybe murdered. . . ."

O'Rourke opened his eyes and raised a hand to the excruciating pain in his head. He felt the warm moisture of blood.

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"Good for you," said Willisen, standing by. "How you feeling?"

O'Rourke got to his feet.

"They smashed me and ran," said O'Rourke, staggering towards the door.

Said Willisen: "I shouldn't have left you alone with the two of them."

"Sure you shouldn't," groaned O'Rourke. "You should have seen that I was a fat-headed old fool. Fat in the brain. A soggy, worthless old fool."

CHAPTER XXII

Escape by Air

THE air was alive, reaching after the two fugitives with electric fingers, touching traces of them here and there. O'Rourke, with a plaster hastily stuck across his wounded head, gripped hard the armrest in the back seat of the radio car that was tearing fast on the road to Manhattan. The reports came through loudly.

The sedan had stopped at a small shop twenty miles down the river, and the blacksmith had been forced to smash the locks of the handcuffs to liberate the hands of the two criminals. They had taken his car, leaving their stolen sedan. They were on their way, now, in a small convertible.

A little later, the convertible was found up the mouth of a narrow lane.

Where were they now?

They were near New York before the radio bawled out fresh news. The two had been pursued by a motor cop for speeding and one of them, reaching coolly out through the window of the car, had put a bullet through a tire of the motorcycle. The policeman had turned in the alarm.

O'Rourke's machine swept on, its siren screeching as it overrode the traffic lights and turned the red to green.

Another report. A little closed car near Jamaica had been sighted and in it two men who resembled the fugitives.

"They're way away from us," said the driver of the car.

"Stop the car!" said O'Rourke.

The driver pulled up.

"What would they be doing on Long Island?" said O'Rourke.

"They got a hideout there, maybe," said the policeman behind the wheel.

"Hideout? Pete's too smart to trust anything to a hideout. Pete—he'd aim for a take-off place."

"Well, an airplane, then?" suggested the man behind the wheel.

"Get me to a phone!" answered O'Rourke. "You've got it, boy!"

A short time later he was calling: "Corrigan! Is that you, Corrigan? O'Rourke. Watch every airport around. Watch Long Island fields. They're going to be in the air before long. Will you spread the word? What comes from Campbell?"

Corrigan said: "Campbell's gone crazy. He wires for the history of a mine out West."

O'Rourke roared: "If he wants to know that, he's not crazy. What mine?"

"The Willoughby Lode. Out in Nevada. He wanted to know about some names."

"What names?"

"Here they are: Winslow, Champion. . . ."

"Did you say Champion? Short that to Champ, and it's the man we want. What other names?"

"Worth, Latimer, Waterson. . . ."

"Corrigan! There's a Latimer on the train with Campbell . . . . and a Josephine Worth!"

"Markham and Glenn are the last

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two. They happen to mean anything?"

"I don't know. Everything means something. Count those names, will you?"

"There are seven of them."

O'Rourke yelled: "Then I've seen the seven faces that go with the names!"

He panted: "Campbell. What else did he want to know?"

"We looked up those names. Couldn't find anything about anybody except a Peter Winslow."

"A *what* Winslow?"

"Peter Winslow."

"Is that my old pal Pete? What about him?"

"1903. Murder. There in Nevada. He got life. Pardoned couple of years back."

"It's him!" cried O'Rourke. "I knew that there was murder in that scrawny mug of his. I'll ring you back for news. Will you step on it, Corrigan?"

The radio car took O'Rourke farther out, across Brooklyn, into the open country. He was free from the city when he stopped at a filling station and telephoned back to Corrigan in New York again.

The voice of the Inspector came roaring down the wire.

"We've got 'em, O'Rourke, and we'll put 'em in the pocket!" called Corrigan.

"Where were they spotted?"

"Your tip did the work. They've taken off for Chicago. We bag them there."

"Is there a fast plane for Chicago?"

"Wait a minute. I'll let you know." A moment later the voice of Corrigan came over the wire: "You can get a plane in fifteen minutes. I've made the reservation for you. Go fast. Here's the address. . . ."

O'Rourke called: "Find out about that man Winslow murdered out there thirty years ago and more. Will you find out? Everything! Find out everything. . . . I've got to run."

CHAPTER XXIII

Warning

THE huge monoplane carried only a dozen passengers from New York towards Chicago, three women and nine men. It was the first passage for one of the ladies. She was a squat little Jewess, wrapped like a bale in her fur coat. When the plane began to go over some of those airy bumps that sink the heart into the stomach or lift it into the throat, she closed her eyes, sank back in her seat, and gripped the paper bag close to her chin for hour on hour.

Two or three of the others were made from time to time a little apprehensive by the bucking of the great plane and looked at one another with startled eyes. But on the whole the the trip was smooth enough. The big ship had been so newly and so strongly insulated against noise that the roar of the motors sounded no more, say, than four riveters on a steel building a block away. The radio could be heard and in fact was heard, to the indignation of a tired old man who continually was aroused from sleep by some crackling outburst of static.

In pauses of the radio, the stewardess, all crisp as snow in her uniform, was monopolized by a red-faced, elderly fellow in a rear seat. He kept his big hands crossed in his lap and looked up with a sidewise grin at her.

She was willing to talk. It was the first airplane she had been in that permitted any conversation quieter than shouting in the ear.

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"This is a great dodge, isn't it?" she asked.

"Yeah," said he, "it's the only noise we ask for that means the right thing."

He took off his hat and ran his hand back over a completely bald head, except for a moderate fringe at the rear. She noted with a sort of amused sympathy the high back of his head and the continual slope down to the eyes, the forehead etched in with a modicum of wrinkles.

"Yeah," said he, understanding her glance, "it sure makes a difference when the hair is lifted off your head. A lot of doggone popular braves, in the old days, must of gotten unpopular after their scalps was lifted. What you think?"

"Well, it's cool," laughed the stewardess.

"It makes a whole lot of face to wash," replied he. "This *is* a dead quiet ship, ain't it?"

"You can talk. That's the big difference," said she. "I used to land all bottled up and I didn't care who would listen."

"How long to Chicago now?" he asked.

The plane mounted over a heavy bank of clouds, golden or white with sun on the upper surface and deepening to dark seas beneath.

The girl said: "Half an hour. A little less. We're making good time."

"How you come to get into this line of work?" he asked.

"Boy friend of mine got a job as a pilot. That was what made me air-minded, as they say."

"Ever cruise on the same plane with him?"

"No, he broke off with me as soon as I got fixed in an air job."

"What kind of a bozo would that be?" the man asked.

"Art was all right," she answered, cocking her head in thought. "He just said that I was already too dizzy and that after a couple of tail-spins I'd have to be put in a can and kept cool for ten years before I got back to normal."

"A mean bird, eh?"

"No, Art wasn't mean. He was just kind of a deep thinker. He knew I didn't have much brains."

"You got a lot of brains," said the bald-headed man. "Anyway, why would anybody wanta carry around a load of fat in the head? It wears out the legs."

"Anyway, Art up and left me. Good old Art!"

"Gunna marry him one of these days?"

"Maybe. I've been married twice already."

"Get out! You? You're not twenty-two!"

"Marriage is only a sort of a quickie, these days," she said.

"What happened to those marriages?"

"One of them got boiled and bumped into a truck. It was a terrible mess. The other marriage got to Reno. Reno's a swell place. Ever been there?"

"I've been there," he answered. "I've been there when it was only a sand lot."

"People are kind of different there," she said. "They know how to have a good time. They don't keep *thinking*."

"Yeah, that spoils a party," he said.

"Don't it?" she confided. "I hate a nine o'clocker."

"What's that?"

"One of these fellows that has to get to the office at nine in the morning. They start getting a conscience about midnight."

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"I never thought about that. That must be hard on a girl."

"It's terrible," she said. "Fellows like that are only human on Saturday evenings; and Saturday is always so crowded everywhere that's worth going to . . . There goes the news!"

THE crooning which had been issuing from the radio stopped and a brisk voice began: "Good evening, folks. This is the news from WRFZ. WRFZ speaking. Weather colder tonight. . . ."

"Weather!" murmured the girl. "As though weather made news!"

"Well, I've seen rain in the desert," the bald man remarked. "That kind of weather can make a difference."

"Oh, the Cobb case," said the girl, and was all ears.

"The murderers of John Cobb have been located, it is believed," said the announcer. "They are thought to be one Peter Winslow and a man named Champion. They are still at large. Please pay attention! They are still at large and perhaps are now in the air on their way to Chicago."

A man in a front seat suddenly sat up a little straighter.

"They are thought to have taken a plane from Long Island for Chicago," went on the voice. "Their description is as follows: Peter Winslow about fifty-eight years old. Withered face but looks young in the distance. Expression smiling. Height about five ten, weight a hundred and fifty. Gray hair. Light step. Makes a good impression. Champion about the same age, height five feet nine, weight a hundred and eighty, still very strong, expression pleasant."

"Think of a murderer looking pleasant!" said the girl.

"Yeah, think of that!"

"Champion," said the voice, "is almost completely bald. Head high behind, not much forehead, short nose, wide mouth. . . ."

The stewardess looked down, agape.

"Steady!" the bald man cautioned. "What's the matter?"

She was too benumbed with fear to move anything except her lungs and her vocal cords. She tilted back her head and began to scream. Every soul in the plane except the fat Jewess leaped up.

"It's him! It's him!" she yelled.

Champion stood up with a gun. His big voice boomed through the cabin: "Set down, ladies and gentlemen. Nobody is gonna be touched. Nobody but brash fools. Just set down and take everything easy, will you?"

They sat down, slowly; one of the women began to cry into her hands. The men looked thoughtfully at one another, each gathering a slight frown of resolution, as though he were considering violent action in this emergency.

From a forward seat a gray-headed, slight fellow pushed open the door to the pilots forward compartment and climbed up into it.

He stood in the blackness, in the volleying roar of the engines.

"Down!" he yelled at the ear of the pilot.

The man turned his head, frowned, and then saw the gun.

"Down! And somewhere short of Chicago!" yelled the passenger.

The assistant pilot began to turn slowly in his place. His chief motioned him to be quiet. The big machine began to wheel slowly around and around in the air.

In front of them they could see the smudge of the great city, a dark pool that kept spreading out towards the

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horizon. Underneath, the woodlands were brown and gray patches. Houses were so small that five of them could have been put on the five tips of the fingers. The ship was like Gulliver in Lilliput.

As it wheeled on down, everything seemed pouring up to meet it. The hills became defined. The trees separated one from another. At last they could see the glimmering windows that took the western sun, and see the glaze of ice here and there across the great meadow towards which the pilot was aiming his forced landing.

So imperceptibly were they settling that they seemed to be standing still until the wheels touched the ground, and suddenly they were a part of the earthly world that shot back around them at a dizzy speed.

CHAPTER XXIV

Reunion

THE Chicago papers came on board the train only a quarter of an hour before it reached the station. Campbell got one and found the Cobb murder spilled large on the front page.

There were two features of importance. One was a last-minute box in heavy type that read:

ARE COBB MURDERERS IN AIR FOR CHICAGO?

And under it: "Two men about sixty years old, suspected of the murder of John Cobb. Their names are Peter Winslow and Champion."

"Peter Winslow. . . . Harry Champion. . . ." muttered Campbell, remembering the list of names.

The second new feature of the Cobb story was a photograph of the dead man. It took his lean face, with its hollow cheeks, from a favorable angle. He looked much younger than his years, and the neat, short-trimmed moustache gave a foreign air of spruceness to his features. It was a good copy of the original portrait and even showed clearly, in the lower corner, the words: "To my friend Jerry Hill, from John Cobb."

Campbell took out the envelope in his pocket on which was written down the fate of fifteen million dollars in a staggering handwriting. The signature was exactly like that on the picture.

The writing of the body of the will was different. The motion of the train would explain, of course, a good many of the jerks and the uncertainties of the script, but it was necessary to recall the craven terror of the writer to understand the continued irregularities. When he came to the signature he had done well enough. Campbell's own signature as witness and that of O'Rourke also were turned out with hardly a flaw. No, the motion of the train could not have explained all of these jerks and waverings. To be sure of it, he took out his pen, turned the envelope to the address side, and commenced to write. There had been little more motion then than there was now, and yet he was managing a fairly clear bit of writing.

He was thoughtful when he put away the envelope and the pen as the train slowed gently for the last stop. There was not much for him to find suspicious; there was no more, say, than a drop of ink to stain a whole quart of water, and yet a little shadow, a tiny filament of doubt had entered the Scotchman's brain.

He picked up his bag and descended to the platform, keeping his eyes well before him where the towering head

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and the great shoulders of Latimer waded through the crowd. His attention was so fixed in advance that he was startled as if by a gunshot when a husky, deep voice said: "Hello, old mother-of-vinegar!"

"O'Rourke!" cried Campbell.

"What put you on the Willoughby Lode?" snapped O'Rourke.

"Come on," said Campbell. "I want to keep an eye on some of these fellows — that Latimer . . . remember?"

"Yes, but the Willoughby Lode?"

"This whole job is tied into the Willoughby Lode, one way or other. Cobb made the money out there. Listen! There are seven names. . . ."

"In the dressing room at Cobb's place there are seven pictures. I've seen the seven faces!" said O'Rourke.

"The devil!"

"What the hell of it?" demanded O'Rourke, suddenly rejoicing. "Yes, or seven devils!" said O'Rourke.

"Have they got Winslow and Champion?" asked Campbell.

"Listen! Hear the kids yelling the story?"

A voice sharp and thin and high as a rooster crowing was yelling: "Cobb murderers force airplane down! All about the Cobb murderers!"

O'Rourke said: "They forced a landing. The fool radio warned them. Where the two of them are now, nobody can guess."

"If the whole gang is working together," said Campbell, "Latimer might lead us to 'em."

"I'll tail him, Angus. Who do you take?"

"I wish there were three parts of me," said Campbell. "I'd follow the girl; and I'd follow Mr. Grosvenor, too. I'll have to take him."

They had passed on through the station. The murk of the evening lay heavily over Chicago. The blind, dead, cold autumn of the year had come. Winter, in comparison, is cheerful. The white of its face makes one think straight forward to the cheerful spring; but in the autumn there is only the wet, dripping sense of the death of the year.

"Where do I keep in touch with you?" asked O'Rourke. "If we're gonna scatter out like this, we've got to know where to find each other."

"Ring me at the Clifton and leave a message of a Mr. James Angus."

O'Rourke thought the heart of the mystery was back in Fullerton. Campbell would have sworn it was on the Chicago train. Both were right, and both were wrong, for amazing events are going to happen in Chicago—in next week's smashing, dramatic episode!

CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR AUGUST

(Continued from Page 117)

Twenty-seven—Arthur J. Brooks, Sault Sainte Marie, Ontario, Canada; Mrs. Josephine Johnson, Pittsburg, Kans.; Julia Kots, Bronx, N. Y.; Tau Pi, Cincinnati, Ohio; Posius, Boston, Mass.; E. Smith, New York, N. Y.; Ess, Vee, Waterbury, Conn.

Twenty-six—Etaoni, Bronx, N. Y.; L. S. H., Washington, D. C.; H. H., Coventry, Ohio; Cecil T. Partner, Kokomo, Ind.; °Hugh B. Rossell, Washington, D. C.; David Seltzer, New York, N. Y.; George Shakeshaft, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; Sunny, Chicago, Ill.

Twenty-five—Mabel B. Canon, Philadelphia, Pa.; Sherlock Holmes II, Brooklyn, N. Y.; J. G. Meerdink, Jersey City, N. J.; °Sue de Nymme, Chicago, Ill.; B. P., Miami, Fla.

Twenty-four—Baab, Montreal, Quebec, Canada; Daffy Dill, Bangor, Me.; Kadash, Tacoma, Wash.; Leotta Lowery, New York, N. Y.; Mahdi, Merrillan, Wis.; Betty Murray, San Francisco, Calif.; Nertz, Waukegan, Ill.; Quay, Springfield, Ill.; Ray Rasmussen, Chicago, Ill.; Flo Rogoway, San Diego, Calif.; Alice M. Shott, Rickreall, Oreg.; Speck, Little Rock, Ark.; Texocron, New York, N. Y.; A. Traveller, Washington, D. C.

(Continued Next Week)

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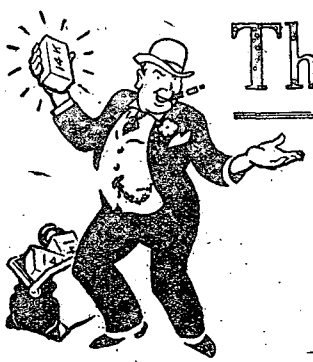

They're Swindling You!

The Cartoon Club

By

Frank Wrentmore

This is the fifty-seventh of a series of articles exposing business rackets that cost you billions of dollars every year! Mr. Wrentmore is an authority on swindles and frauds, well known to legal, financial and commercial associations.—The Editor.

"ANY interesting cases lately?" I asked my friend Detective Mike Matis of the Main Office Division the other day.

"Yes, I picked up a fellow a couple of weeks ago who had me buffaloed until I got the low-down." Mike replied.

"What kind of a racket?"

"Well, Frank, I'll tell you and see if it isn't a new one on you, too. We had a telephone call from an insurance man named Hawkins who said that he was suspicious of a fellow who called himself Horace Frazer and who was going to be at his office in about an hour to pick up a hundred dollar check. Frazer had previously called Hawkins on the telephone and represented himself as the secretary of the Cartoon Club, which, he said was composed of the leading newspaper cartoonists. The Club, he said, had leased a building for their clubhouse, but it needed some remodeling and furnishings which required more money than they had in their treasury so they had decided to accept a certain number of honorary members who were not in the newspaper profession.

"These honorary members, however, would be required to loan the Club a sum of money for which they would be given a note, payable in six months, and for this favor they would also be made honorary members of the Club for life."

"A note, eh?" I inquired.

"Yes, Frank. Now you know that if a man accepts another man's note for a loan, that isn't larceny, even if the note is never paid."

"That's right," I replied. "What did you do?"

"I took my partner down to Hawkins' office to wait for Mr. Frazer. We waited and waited but he didn't show. Finally he telephoned Hawkins that he was detained uptown and was afraid that it would be necessary for him to send a messenger for the check. Would that be all right with Mr. Hawkins? I was listening to the conversation on an extension telephone and nodded

"I am glad to endorse the program of *Detective Fiction Weekly* which will bring to its readers the truth about rackets and racketeers. No man can be swindled if he knows in advance what the swindler is going to do—and nobody *wants* to be swindled."—Edward L. Greene, General Manager of the National Better Business Bureau.

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my head, so Hawkins said, 'Yes.'

"In about half an hour a Western Union boy came in with an envelope. It contained a letter written on the letterhead of the Cartoon Club and a six month promissory note for $100 signed by Frazer. I then questioned the messenger who wouldn't talk until I showed him my badge but who then gave us an excellent description of Frazer who, he said, had arranged to meet him in the bar of an uptown hotel.

"We left the kid in Hawkins' office with instructions to leave, alone, for the hotel in about ten minutes and we set out in advance in order to be there when the boy arrived and handed Frazer the check. We couldn't leave the office building with the boy because if Frazer was smart and had the boy followed, that would be the tip-off that something was wrong.

"WE were in the bar when the boy arrived. Frazer wasn't in the bar-room, but the boy stood around for a few minutes, as he had been instructed, and then Frazer approached him. As soon as he took the envelope, we closed in.

"We took him to the lobby of the hotel for a chat after giving him a quick frisk and he began to pull out letters and credentials. They looked genuine enough, but I was positive that he wasn't on the up and up because he had sent the boy for the check. That six-months note bothered me too. I wasn't willing to take a chance on a false arrest, so I left Frazer with my partner, Herbert Moser, while I telephoned Nelson Cantor at the District Attorney's office for some legal advice. Cantor said to bring him in, and I felt better.

"When we got to the D.A.'s office and Cantor started the questioning, I could see where he was heading. I showed Cantor the note and it bothered him a little, but then we gave Frazer another frisk and found a bunch of notes all made out and signed.

"Frazer finally admitted that the Cartoon Club had not leased a building —yet. He was also very hazy about the names of the members of the Club. After half an hour of questioning, Cantor told us to lock him up.

"'You can't lock a man up for borrowing money. I haven't done anything else,' said Frazer."

"'Change your lawyer,' said Cantor. 'He forgot to tell you that you can't make false statements in order to get the loan.'"

"So I booked him on a charge of larceny by false pretense. When he was arraigned in Magistrate's Court he waived examination and was held for Special Sessions. I think he intends to cop a plea in Sessions and try for a light sentence. I'll admit though, that the note had me worried, but then I'm no D.A. Oh, yes, while we were taking him back to Headquarters he admitted that there wasn't any Cartoon Club. That cinches it."

This article will tell some New Yorkers for the first time how they were rooked by Mr. Frazer who has been working the town for years. It also explains how one racketeer tried to use the law for his own ends in devising an air-tight racket. His theory was sound enough—as far as it went—but he overlooked one fatal detail.

The lesson for you is that when you accept a note you do it at your own risk. Many racketeers know this and leave you holding their note—and the bag.

Next Week—Own Your Own Home

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Solving Cipher Secrets

A cipher is secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters *e, t, a, o, n, i,* are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has used X to represent e, X will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. Thus, the affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Read the helpful hints at the beginning of this department each week. The first cryptogram each week is the easiest.

M. E. OHAVER
"Sunyam"

OUR *Inner Circle Club*—which is composed of cryptofans who have submitted 1,000 or more answers to this department—claimed three new members in July, raising the total membership to fifty-six! The July members, to whom we extend our heartiest congratulations, include: CIPHERMIT James Watts, Houlton, Me., who totaled 1,000 answers with the July 4 issue; W. E. Dalton, Marion, Ind., who totaled 1,001 answers with the July 18 issue; and SUE DE NYMME, Mabel Verona McKeown, Chicago, Ill., who totaled 1,002 answers with the July 25 issue.

Inner Circle Club membership is for life—or, more correctly, for perpetuity. All answers submitted to this department, for cryptograms, divisions, special puzzles, etc., apply toward your score, and your 1,000 answers do not have to be consecutive nor from consecutive issues. Further, if you send us any 100 or more answers this year, your name will be listed in our *Honor Roll for 1936*. And even a single answer for any month will list you in the monthly *Cipher Solvers' Club*. This year's *Honor Roll* and *Inner Circle Club* standing will be published early next year. Keep your answers coming, cryptofans!

Last week's tetragraphic Inner Circle cipher, Romeo's No. 264, afforded entry through the pattern YPVY. Trying symbol P as *e* (by frequency and finality), and with symbol V marked as probably a vowel in XVRR (frequencies 5-12-6-6), YPVY (*-e--*) suggested *dead*. Next, noting symbol L as probably *y* (used mostly as a final), context yielded *body* for THYL (*--dy*). And so to the starred group *VEYL (*A-dy*), evidently *Andy;* YHFE (*do-n*), *down;* etc. Par on No. 264 has been fixed at 150 solutions, and the number of answers received will be announced later! By the way, Magi's catalogic cryptogram of mining terms, "Brob, Cage, Adit," No. 180 of July 25, carrying a par of 180 solutions, elicited just 171 answers!

Opening this week's puzzles, Bee-Gee-Bee's division uses a two-word key phrase, numbered *0123 456789*. Suggested solution: separate *odd* and *even* symbols; eliminate for *zero;* note F — C = N; and reconstruct NFK × N = OCFO. In Jack Northam's crypt, compare ZLXK XKF, KBYF B, BRE, and LR, following this up with PFBRLRH, CFLRH, and UFOBXFE. In Leatherneck's contribution, identify RVX and RVXZX'BB for a starter. Then try for the short words KR, RXH, KHP, and HE. These words, correctly guessed, will provide all but one letter in ZKT-BZEKP and RZKTH'BB.

Qpkwins provides the four-letter pattern word KVSK, used before a quotation, for an opening in his construction. Note also these short words, VFU, SXL, FXH, and HX. And thus to VOO-XYU; etc. Can you guess symbol X (frequency 8) in Lethargic's message? There are several interesting pattern groups here featuring that symbol; also note BY, used four times. A solution of U. U. Jeff's inner circle cipher, and the answers to all of this week's puzzles, will be published next week. The asterisks in Nos. 268-69 indicate capitalization.

No. 265—Cryptic Division. By Bee-Gee-Bee.

```
NFK)SOALS(RAN
ASF
---
 RRRL
 RCER
---
  OFNS
  OCFO
---
   NSE
```


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No. 266—Threefold Resemblance. By Jack Northam.

"DSDSB" BRE "DBDBS" KBYF B XULTOF VLPLOBULXA, CFLRH UFOBXFE LR PFBRLRH, VTFOOFE ZLXK XKF VBPF OFXXFUV, BRE SG OLNF TBXXFUR.

No. 267—Modified Schedule. By Leatherneck.

AFKBB-REGH ZKTBZEKP NSBBXRTH: "RVX RXH E'OBEOD RZKTH'BB UE KR XBXYXH E'OBEOD REHTUVR, KHP RVXZX'BB NX HE BKAR RZKTH."

No. 268—Sensible Advice. By Qpkwins.

*ZYXVUTVS *ZRPP, OVNXLK HLYO GXNNLFRGVHXY VFU KHXYS HDPPDY, KVSK: "XFPS TVEDY TCVH SXL GVF VOOXYU HX PXKD; ZLH FXH TCVH SXL DBADGH HX TRF!"

No. 269—Confused Consumer. By Lethargic.

HLV YLXXAT, RNZT DUPLOZUN PZXX BY RKUOONA BY DUPLOZAT BY PLXUKKA PUXUUK, "*XAA *KAVGAXFBZT," I'LHMLH PLFBZUE, PAYZGGNA SBKBVLE MLOT BY NAEDAKBZT KBZA.

No. 270—The Law Wins. By U. U. Jeff.

ABCDE FGGHEJK LDMLN FBODPQ AJK-EDHRM SAJPQ. RMNJBML TADPDN HADUN VBL PAGUH, CBLBEDMS WGEBPR. RBLFS HRDH, TGJA HXBML, NBY NEBLFSEX FJAS. PGWN JMBMOJARH. VADCG!

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

259—Key:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
S	P	U	N	K	Y	M	I	T	E

260—Brisk weather, pumpkins in school windows, mischievous urchins with merry grins, witches and gnarled hobgoblins abroad, all give notice that Hallowe'en is nigh!

261—"When two typical Americans meet, one is sure to grab a gavel and call the meeting to order."—Will Rogers.

262—Softball is fast replacing regulation baseball as the most popular sport. Huge crowds witness games between local tens nightly.

263—Trig yacht weighs anchor, screw churns grayish surface into yeasty froth; jaunty craft obeys helm, begins month-long voyage cruising mighty ocean.

264—Glum Andy, yegg, fits mask upon face, hops over rail. Cops give loud call. Andy runs down dark lane. Guns bark! Cops find dead body, face down, amid turf.

Readers sending us answers to one or more of this week's ciphers will be duly credited in our *Cipher Solvers' Club* for November. Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

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Civil Service Q & A

By "G-2"

Could You Qualify as—

Police Patrolman	Special Agent (G-Man)
Police Detective	Secret Service Operative
Policewoman	Post Office Inspector
Fingerprint Expert	Customs Patrol
State Trooper	Immigration Patrol
Crime Prevention Investigator	Anti-Narcotic Agent
Probation Officer	Parole Investigator
Criminologist	Prison Keeper
Police Radio Expert	Internal Revenue Agent
	Alcohol Tax Agent

This department will give you every week typical questions asked in civil service examinations.

Security and Insurance

THE administration of Old Age Security and Unemployment Insurance laws by Federal and State agencies means a new opportunity for men and women who know accounting, auditing and bookkeeping and others who are skilled in the operation of bookkeeping, tabulating and computing machines. In September, 1936, the United States Civil Service Commission announced a written test for accounting and auditing assistant and, it is expected, additional tests will be given during 1937.

In many states where new security laws have been enacted similar tests have been announced in addition to regular tests for bookkeeping, auditors and accountants who are needed in increasing numbers to fill vacancies in state and city offices and public institutions where bookkeeping and accounting are indispensable. The large number of applications filed for the Federal accounting and auditing assistant test indicates the wide interest in this type of test. The job pays $1,800 a year, and those who succeed in the test may accept employment, if they choose, in various branches of the government at salaries ranging from $1,620 to $1,440. The duties of accounting and auditing assistant are to audit vouchers and expense accounts, to distribute expenditures, compile statistical data and reports, keep records and accounts and to perform related duties.

The test is written and consists of a mental section with a weight of 20; computations and arithmetic, weight 30; and questions and problems in elements of accounting. In the mental test competitors without military preference must attain a rating of at least 70; in the computations and arithmetic test at least 70, and in elements of accounting the minimum rating must be attained or competitors will not be rated at all. On all three sections a minimum average rating of 70, including military preference allowances, must be attained to rate a place on the eligible register.

Educational and experience requirements are as follows: (a) completion of at least two years in a residence school in accountancy, business administration, or other business course including not less than one year's study of bookkeeping and accounting; (b) at least two years of full-time paid experience in bookkeeping accounting or auditing. The age limit is 55, except in the case of competitors granted military

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preference. Applicants must be in sound physical health, but remediable defects or curable disease will not exclude a person from the examination though the applicant must prove during the life of the eligible register that such defects have been remedied or the disease cured. Persons selected for appointment must pass a physical examination. All applicants must be citizens of the United States and must show actual residence for six months in the state or territory claimed as their residence. Application form eight is used in this test.

For the big jobs on the Federal Social Security Board a knowledge of accounting is not essential, but it will help. These upper brackets jobs are those of principal administrative officer, $5,600 a year; senior administrative officer, $6,000 a year; administrative officer, $3,800 a year; senior administrative assistant, $3,200 a year. No assembled, written test is given and a thorough experience in the administration of large organizations as well as college training is required. The jobs are under the Director of Federal Old Age benefits.

That there is always a demand for qualified accountants, auditors, account clerks, statisticians, operators of bookkeeping, calculating and tabulating machines is indictated by the increasing number of Federal, State and City tests held during the past two years. Here is a list of these jobs:

Accountant and auditor, $3,200 a year; assistant accountant and auditor, $2,600 a year; senior accounting and auditing assistant, $2,000 a year, U. S. Interstate Commerce Commission.

Specialist in public finance, $5,600 a year, U. S. Bureau of Census.

Head account clerk, $2,100 a year; accountant bookkeeper, $1,600 to $2,100; senior public service accountant, $3,000 to $3,600 a year; senior accountant, $2,400 to $3,000 a year; senior statistics clerk, $1,200 a year; junior statistician, $1,800 a year; supervisor of payroll audits, $5,000 a year; departmental auditors, $1,200 to $2,600 a year; clerk-bookkeeper, $1,600 to $3,840 a year; bookkeeping machine operator, $1,200 to $1,600 a year; junior calculating machine operator, $1,440 to $1,600 a year; tabulating machine operator, $1,000 to $1,500 a year; Moon-Hopkins machine operator, $1,200 a year; comptometer operator, $1,200 to $1,800 a year; assistant tabulating clerk, $900 to $1,200 a year. These by no means are all the positions which are related to accounting, auditing and bookkeeping; they are merely those for which tests were held in 1935 and 1936 in various cities and states. And, from time to time, the same tests will be held to fill vacancies or provide personnel for newly installed branches of the government. In addition tests for promotion are held throughout the year.

It is impossible to fix a uniform age limit for these tests since they are uniform in no two states or cities. Likewise physical and health standards vary, also the pay. It is apparent, however, that Civil Service is offering opportunities in the field of accounting and bookkeeping. And there are other indications of the increased demand for this type of specialist. During 1937, more than 4,000,000,000 entries will be made by bookkeepers and accountants in the United States. This is double the number made in 1936. New tax and business laws are responsible for this increase.

Next week a sample test for senior account clerk will be published in these columns to be followed by a recently given test for bookkeeper.

STILL GOING STRONG

The two math problems submitted to this department by R. D. Nicola seem destined to outlive the famous brain teaser, which came first, chicken or egg? The latest contribution to the controversy comes from Harry Dickson of Brooklyn, N. Y., who writes:

"In your issue of August 15 this year are reprinted two questions formulated by R. D. Nicola which have since been incorporated into Civil Service examinations. Solutions were proposed by Lee A. Miller, re Question 2, namely: "What is the largest amount that can be expressed in 3 figures?" I beg to differ, violently, with the solution of Mr. Miller's which you so complacently accept. You ask a broad question with a multiplicity of possibilities and dare to not only give a suggested result, but to smugly say, "there is no doubt, etc." I detest things which are generally accepted without proof in the first place. In the second place I don't believe they

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are generally accepted. It's the ego of the parent of the idea which prompts him to take the easiest way out when attempting to prove something.

"So I decided to find an error in your solution, and I find not only an error, but errors. And in the third place, I may be wrong in the first and second place, so here it is. It is evident that, when seeking a maximum number based on three figures, the figures will be the highest in our numerical system, namely, nines (9's). Moreover, since we are seeking a maximum number, the figures must be involved as powers, since that would give a greater number than any other algebraic device. As far as that goes, Mr. Miller is quite correct; but only so far. Let us examine his solution. In answers of such great magnitude we can disregard the actual figures of the numbers themselves as not significant and keep in mind only the number of digits involved. His solution then is $9^{(99)}$ whose answer will be, at the most, a figure of ninety-nine (99) digits. For example; 9 to the second power (9^2) = 81; two digits; 9 to the third power (9^3) = 729; three digits. Evidently, since the first number of the result of any power (the eight in the second; the seven in the third) cannot exceed nine (9) and when it is multiplied by 9 cannot succeed in adding more than one (1) digit for any succeeding power of nine (9); the result of $9^{(99)}$ cannot result in a figure of more than ninety-nine (99) digits. This, however, is not the largest number available. It does not even rank second.

"Consider the expression $9^{(9^9)}$ which also involves only three figures but which is equal to $9^{(369,420,489)}$ which gives an answer with about 369 million figures. This, I believe, is the largest figure available under the stated conditions. Following closely on the heels of this gigantic, colossal number (it probably will get a Hollywood contract now) is the next largest $9^{(9)^{(9)}}$ (nine to the ninth power to the ninth power) also expressed as $(9^9)^9$. Following the reasoning employed in the case of $9^{(99)}$ this figure $(9^9)^9$ will result in an answer of about 81 million digits. While this figure is approximate it is accurate enough to rank it definitely second and far, far ahead of $9^{(99)}$. And so, in the order of their magnitude, I would put in first place $9^{(9^9)}$; in second place $(9^9)^9$; and in third place your $9^{(99)}$.

"By all means, however, keep up this excellent department in your weekly. If it is good enough to make me write so lengthy a letter, it's GOOD."

After wading through that sea of nines we are all for simplicity as explained in the letter from H. E. Hindshaw of Auburn, N. Y., who writes: "A friend of mine who is handy with a slide rule and logarithms worked this (the 9 problem) out with a mere 94 ciphers. Then he said "Try this one (99)9, or, better yet, 99^9. Was he correct or not?" We leave the friend with the slide rule to Mr. Dickson, fervently imploring the printer who sets this type to arrange the climbing nines in their proper elevations.

Q AND A BOX

Questions pertaining to Civil Service examinations will be answered without cost. If an individual reply is desired enclose stamped, addressed envelope.

Andrew Galligan, Des Moines, and others. The jobs of assistant keeper and keeper in Federal lighthouses is under Civil Service. The jobs pay, respectively, $1,080 to $2,160 a year. Competitors are not required to report for written examination, but are rated on experience and fitness. Age limits 18 but not 48th birthday. If you like the lonely life this is the job for you.

Ellen Hodder, Seattle, Wash. An examination for clinical director, (female), $5,600 a year, and associate psychotherapist (female), $3,200 a year, was held by the U. S. Civil Service Commission in the summer of 1936 to fill positions in St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, D. C. It was an unwritten, unassembled examination.

Philip Randall, Tucson, Arizona; John Storm, Chicago; H. T. Broad, Memphis, Tenn. When standards are set for teeth in Civil Service tests the requirements usually are "The teeth must be well cared for and free from multiple cavities. Missing teeth must be replaced and there must be proper apposition of teeth for mastication."

Next Week—Account Clerk Test

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FLASHES from READERS

FOR many years, Johnston McCulley has thrilled readers with the works of his pen, including the thrilling adventures of that glamorous rascal, Zorro, made famous by "The Mark of Zorro," etc. The editors believe that "Fangs of Felony," which appears in this issue, offers readers the same spectacular fiction excitement and satisfaction.

A newcomer to our pages is Margie Harris, whose novelette, "Foolproof Alibi," readily substantiates her claims to fame.

We would be especially glad to hear from readers about these two stories, or about anything else in connection with, or pertaining to, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

A letter from Honolulu.

DEAR EDITOR:

Away out here in about mid-Pacific I am what might be called a *malihini* or newcomer as re: the reading of your magazine as I just became acquainted with it through an ad in RAILROAD STORIES about six months ago. In a certain sense it is somewhat of a treat to get away from high-class professional treatises and get into the realm of adventure, through your magazine.

Your "The Night I Died," several issues back, was very good.

Your fiction stories, of course, are "fiction stories," but they do not stretch the imagination so much as several other good magazines.

I do not seem to have advanced far enough to get anything out of your "Cipher Codes"; maybe some day, but your "PICKING YOUR OWN POCKET," by Frank Wrentmore, is worth the price of the magazine alone.

Must close; just wanted you to know that your work is appreciated "out West" here by a number of readers.

Very truly yours,
(just sign) WOODY,
Honolulu, T. H.

More news of the Spanish Prisoner.

DEAR EDITOR:

Always amused and often instructed by Frank Wrentmore's observations, my attention was held by his "Spanish Prisoner," in the issue of the above date. Only the American Consular corps knew it as "The Spanish Swindle." The story is substantially as Mr. Wrentmore so delightfully tells it, except when he says: "I have yet to hear, at first hand, of any person being hooked by this hoary old swindle.

It gives me pleasure to give it to you, *amigo*, absolutely "first hand." Time: 1903. Sucker or sap—as you choose—a lanky, hungry gentleman from Michigan. He had invested $1,500 in good American money in the prospective fortune which his "brother" had left on deposit in a bank, but which was then in chancery. The correspondent had given cash bond to the amount of $5,000 and if Mr. Sap would send the amount or come himself with the money, the fortune might be lifted. All the benign Spaniard asked was 25%. But he would have to hurry. . . .

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Mr. Sap did not have $5,000 or did not want to risk that much, so he sent $1,500. And having thrown this bit of salt on the tail of the bird, and hearing nothing from the twitterer, he began to bombard the Department of State in Washington with letters. The philanthropists of that institution, finding a sense of humor where one never was, directed him to the consular officer in Madrid.

Sapinsky came. Thin-featured, sallow-complexioned, horse-toothed and loose-chinned, he vibrantly asked the consul to get him his money. The official, having a sense of never-drying humor, said: "Of course." And began to ask a few questions. Did the inquirer ever have a brother who had gone to sea, had been stranded near Cadiz? Sapinsky glowered, but was obliged to say, "Never knew of one." Was it not a fact that he meant to get something that did not belong to him virtually "fencing," aiding and abetting a felony?

Well, Sapinsky went back to Michigan, wiser but not better, I fear. But the consular officer in Madrid began to look into the matter. He discovered that the police—head to toe—were in on the graft. In fact, diplomatic influence was brought to bear to drop the matter; and the Department of State asked the consul to soft-pedal the "Spanish Swindle." Look up the consular reports from the Spanish capital for 1903-'04 and you will find a juicy tale.

Sincerely,

ADOLPHE DECASTRO,
New York City.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

THE RIDDLE OF THE WHITE WIG

A Smashing Novelette of the War Against Crime

By James W. Booth

A WOMAN'S intuition made *Rip Hastings* laugh; amused, unconvinced—until horrible, ruthless murders, like blood-red beads on a black thread, proved *Connie's* hunch correct and forced *Hastings,* facing death from a killer's gun, to gamble his life on a woman's courage. . . .

AFTERNOON OF A PHONY

The Strange History of a Confidence Man with a Dual Personality

By Cornell Woolrich

Stories by:

MAX BRAND

ROBERT W. SNEDDON -:- D. B. McCANDLESS

and many others

Plus the usual DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY features by FRANK WRENTMORE, "G-2," STOOKIE ALLEN and M. E. OHAVER

ALL IN THE NOVEMBER 14 ISSUE!

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

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A BAD CASE OF PIMPLES MADE NAT HATE TO GO PLACES—

A NICE CLUBBY GUY YOU ARE. WHAT'S THE IDEA — KEEPING YOURSELF ALL TO YOURSELF THIS WAY? FRAN'S PRETTY PEEVED AT YOU FOR TURNING DOWN HER INVITE
AW QUIT YELPING, STEVE — I'D GO FAST ENOUGH IF ONLY I DIDN'T HAVE THIS FACE FULL OF HICKIES — BUT GOSH I LOOK SO AWFUL-I-

SAY, FRAN — I'VE FOUND OUT WHY NAT'S ACTING SO QUEER, AN' STICKS HOME SO MUCH — SEEMS HE'S ALL WORKED UP OVER THOSE HICKIES HE'S GOT
POOR KID — HE OUGHT TO EAT FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST — IT'S SIMPLY MARVELOUS HOW IT GETS RID OF PIMPLES — STEVE, WHY DON'T YOU TELL HIM ABOUT IT?

OH, ISN'T NAT IN, MRS. JONES? THEN WILL YOU GIVE HIM THESE? TELL HIM I'VE HEARD THIS YEAST JUST WRECKS PIMPLES — AN' THAT'S A FACT...
THANK YOU, STEVE — I'LL TELL NAT ALL YOU SAID AND I'LL MAKE SURE HE EATS THESE YEAST CAKES REGULARLY

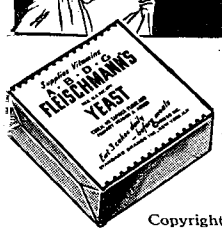
PRETTY GOOD, ISN'T IT, WHAT YOU AN' ME AN' FLEISCHMANN'S YEAST DID FOR OLD NAT — HE'S ACTIN' LIKE A REGULAR GUY AGAIN SINCE THOSE PIMPLES DID A FADEOUT

Don't let Adolescent Pimples make YOU miss out on Good Times

NEARLY all boys and girls are subject to pimples after the start of adolescence—from about 13 to 25, or even longer.

During these years important glands develop and final growth takes place. Disturbances occur throughout the body. The skin gets oversensitive. Waste poisons in the blood irritate this sensitive skin. Pimples appear!

Fleischmann's fresh Yeast helps to give you back a good complexion by clearing these skin irritants out of the blood. Then—the pimples go! Eat 3 cakes daily—one cake about ½ hour before meals—plain, or in a little water—until your skin clears.



—clears the skin

by clearing skin irritants out of the blood

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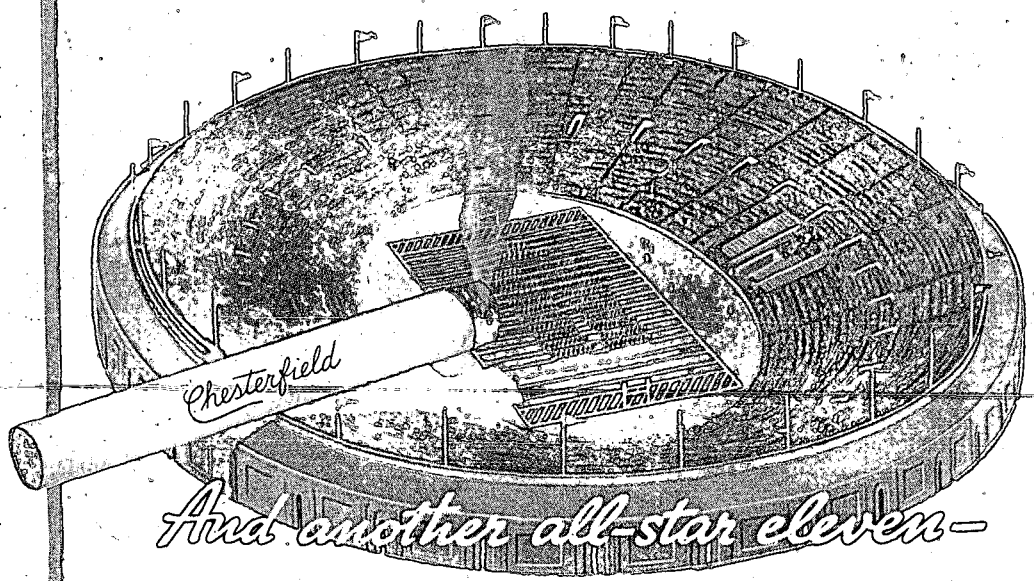
A Tribute to Football

Blocking backs and interference—
Fifty thousand wild adherents—
Tackle thrusts and headlong clashes,
Two yard bucks and dizzy dashes,
Head and shoulder, heart and soul,
Till you fall across the goal.



And another all-star eleven—

THEY SATISFY

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